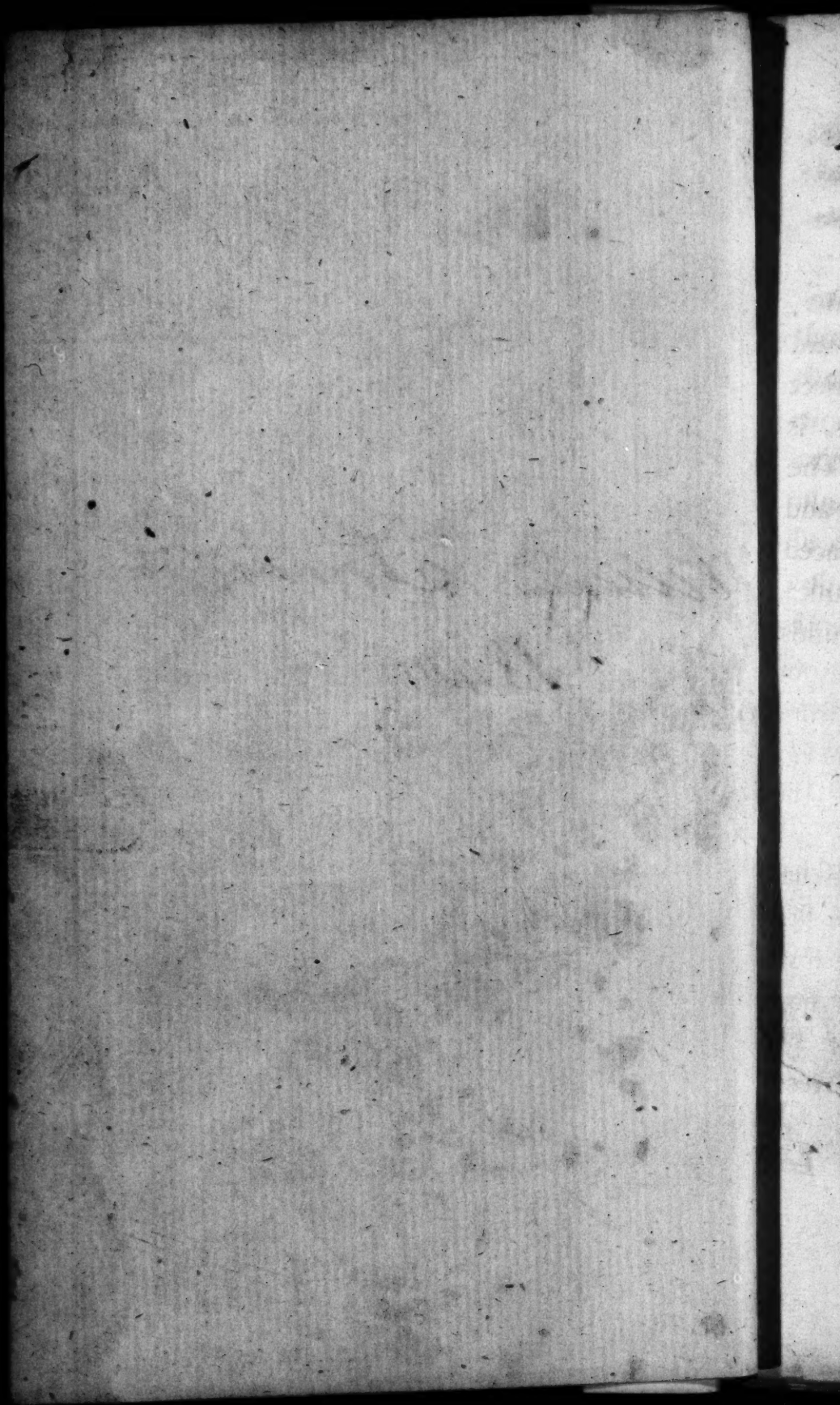


William Townsend

1840



Mr. Pringle
ANGELINA;

A NOVEL,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

Mrs. MARY ROBINSON,

AUTHOR OF

POEMS, VANCENZA, THE WIDOW,

&c. &c. &c. &c.

VOL. I.

London :

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,

AND SOLD

BY HOOKHAM AND CARPENTER, NO. 147,
NEW BOND STREET.

1796.

AN OBITUARY

A NOVEL

IN THREE VOLUMES

MR. HARRY ROBINSON

POET, AND THE WIDOW

AND THE WIDOW



PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR

BY HUGHES AND CARPENTERS, NO. 10,
NEW BOND STREET.

1840

ERRATA TO VOL. I.

- Page 29, line 12, for shillings *bas*, read shillings *bons*.
31, line 5, for *ren*, read *Ren*.
—, line 13, for *sloath*, read *clothe*.
36, line 9, for *idot*, read *idiot*.
61, line 9, omit *and*.
62, line 24, read *carpeted*.
86, line 25, for *answered*, read *replied*.
116, line 8, for *file*, read *order*.
119, line 8, for *entiment*, read *sentiment*.
136, line 10, for *jobb*, read *job*.
184, line 21, for *own* to offend, read *ever* to offend.

to be known to the community
with an object

REBATE NO. VOL. I.

Page 225, line 12, for "billings" read "billings" done
do line 13, for "and" read "and"
— line 22, for "about" read "about"
— line 23, for "the" read "the"
— line 24, for "the" read "the"
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ANGELINA.

LETTER I.

*Lord ACRELAND to Sir GEORGE FAIR-
FORD.*

Cavendish Square.

YOUR knowledge of the world, and philanthropic character, prompt me to open my heart with confidence respecting the important secret which is the subject of this letter ; a secret which has long disturbed my repose, and which must be elucidated without farther procrastination.

You know, my dear friend, that though my estate is one of the most splendid in the kingdom, a variety of circumstances have conspired to load it with incumbrances that will not easily be removed.

The blind affection which I have for so many years evinced for a thoughtless and dissipated sister, who has never followed the sage admonitions of prudence in any one action of her life, except in the preservation of her personal honour, has tended not a little to increase the magnitude of my present distresses: her gaming debts, splendid establishment, expensive wardrobe, summer excursions, winter assemblies, and total contempt for all investigations of domestic accounts, together with my own folly on the turf, and the extravagance of sordid connections among women of the most profligate description, have so unhinged my finances, that I found it absolutely necessary to make some desperate effort, to snatch me from the most painful humiliations.

Thus situated, the old expedient, a rich wife, appeared the most certain and probable remedy I could adopt. We always find this blessed consolation even in the last extremity, where rank holds out the temptation; ambition grasps at the shadow, we enjoy the substance; in other words,

words, we sell what is of little use to us, and obtain for our bargain that which will purchase all the gratifications this world can afford.

Every circle in this overgrown metropolis presents wealthy upstarts; who, to varnish over their original insignificance, are on the watch for needy nobility, whose wants may reduce them to the humiliation of forming connections, from which their pride shrinks with abhorrence. Indeed we constantly behold young women of little birth, and great fortune, as indelicately exposed to sale, as our horses or our hounds: with this difference only, that we are not permitted, on any account whatever, to inquire the pedigree of our purchase; we have only to give them a name, and they pass for thorough-bred in all the circles of fashionable dissipation.

To decide on a matter of such serious importance required, at least, some consideration: I had to select a partner for life out of three distinct classes of women. The first, the daughter of some rich citizen, who pants for an alliance with nobility;

bility; the second, a buxom widow, who having outlived a wealthy Asiatic dotard, starts for a coronet, without considering the qualifications of its possessor, either mental or personal; the third, an antiquated virgin, who having mocked the swiftness of time, is at last overtaken by him; one, who more nice than wise in her days of youthful attraction, now finds the dreadful necessity of taking a partner at any rate, to avoid the ridicule of a sarcastic world.

Conscious that the business of forming such alliances was not very fatiguing, for the indolence of my nature would not endure a tedious process, I began the research only a month ago, and fortune has already started game of the very wealthiest order:—at Lady Arranford's assembly I met with a young person whose beauty, at first, fascinated my attention; there was a polish in her manner, a grace in every thing she did, and an intelligence in every thing she uttered!—Now, thought I, if this girl should happen to have a tolerable fortune, I would not hesitate to propose immediately. Lady Arranford, who

who has always been my most intimate friend, was consulted on the occasion; and to my infinite joy, she informed me that the object of my admiration was the only daughter of Sir Edward Clarendon, a rich West India merchant, who, not content with having received the dignity of knighthood, was eager in the pursuit of more substantial honours. "Now," said Lady Arranford, "if you could reconcile such an alliance to the pride of your family, you have the best chance in the world; for I have often heard Sir Edward declare, that nothing less than a peer of Great Britain should ever have the honour to become his son-in-law."—Thus chance has bestowed on me the ticket which will entitle Miss Clarendon to the rank her father covets, and bring a prize in return, which will cement the shattered fabric of my ancient possessions.

With little difficulty I was introduced to the Knight, and with as little ceremony declared myself the suitor of the lovely Miss Clarendon. Sir Edward seems per-

fectly indifferent as to the sentiments of his daughter, for when I requested permission to solicit her hand, to conciliate her esteem, and to declare my passion, he abruptly concluded my well-studied rhapsody, by assuring me, that I may depend upon his word, Miss Clarendon would not think of refusing so eligible an alliance. Thus am I, without the smallest trouble on my part, to be the husband of a lovely girl of eighteen, with a most splendid fortune; and, what is not quite so desirable, the son-in-law of the most complete savage in the universe. The die is cast, and I must endeavour to make the best of a convenient bargain.

I am informed that Sir Edward's name is proverbial in the city for every thing low, sordid, illiterate, and unfeeling. In the early part of his life it was his good fortune to marry one of the co-heiresses of a rich Welch baronet. His wife's wealth was the foundation of his present splendour; and by all the meanness of avarice, united with the most indefatigable labour, for the space of thirty years, he

he has amassed a sum sufficient to purchase the respect of congenial minds, for his consequence in the commercial world, and a title for his daughter in the circle of pleasure and dissipation. In justice to the young woman, I must confess, that she is beautiful, gentle, unassuming, and accomplished. Lady Clarendon dying when her daughter was an infant, the care of her education was left to the entire management of her aunt, Miss Juliana Pengwynn, her mother's sister. With this Lady she visited Paris, and passed several years in Italy; for the venerable virgin is a perfect judge of the antique, and has read the most admired Greek and Latin authors in their original languages; to say the truth, she is an enlightened and intelligent female. To her I owe the cultivation of those mental graces by which Miss Clarendon will compensate for the ignorance and vulgarity of the good knight her father. So much for my prospects of approaching happiness.

Now, my friend, let me unfold my sentiments upon another far more interesting

subject. Before I was of age I entered into a solemn engagement with a woman whose virtues, genius, and beauty, rendered her of the first order of beings ! my mind would madden at the retrospect of her injuries, or my own inhumanity ! under a thorough conviction that I have been dead for some years, she has resided in solitude ; I never sought her abode, because I had not resolution to meet the reproaches of one, to whom I had shewn so little justice, and whose affection for me had made me so much her debtor. The pleasures of the world never could entirely obliterate the memory of perfections, unequalled, or its vast variety of beauty present a single object that could bear a comparison with her whom I had deserted. Her claims were of the most sacred and inviolable nature ; her rights were indisputable ; but as her high spirit disdained to become dependent on the mercy of my family, so the generosity of her nature induced her to preserve my interest, at the expense of her own reputation. You will say this is enigmatical ; I mean that it should be so.

Having

Having thus awakened your curiosity, let me conjure you to be secret. I shall only add, that it is absolutely necessary, both for my honour and Miss Clarendon's peace of mind, that the existence, or the death of this recluse should be ascertained, previous to our marriage. I was informed, about six years since, that she resided in South Wales; I did not make minute inquiry, because I have always dreaded even the smallest event that could awaken remorse in my breast, or recall the memory of her claims on its compassion.

You mentioned a few days since that it was your intention to make the tour of Wales, during this summer: the idea instantly struck me, that in your journey chance may lead you to the retirement of this amiable woman. Her name is Angelina Sydenham; she is so proudly distinguished by intellectual acquirements and exterior beauty, that you would discover her amongst a million. Heaven forbid that I should ever see her; I should instantly relapse into all my former fondness, and

consequently become an object of universal ridicule.

Remember, should you discover the abode of Mrs. Sydenham, do not reveal it to any person whatever; she thinks I am no longer living; let her continue in that opinion till you hear from me, authorizing you to undeceive her. The account of your rambles will afford me infinite pleasure, and I shall wait with impatience for the result of your researches.

In a few days I purpose visiting Clarendon Abbey; and I shall endeavour to protract my union with Sir Edward's family, if possible, till you have quitted Wales: at all events let me hear from you, and believe me,

Dear Sir George,

Your's faithfully,

ACRELAND.

LET-

LETTER II.

SOPHIA CLARENDON *to Mrs. HORTON.*

Crutched Friars.

IT is peculiarly unfortunate that we should be separated at a moment the most perplexing, and the most painful, I have ever experienced. How shall I describe my situation! How shall I convince you that prospects, fraught with all the glare of magnificence, only fill my mind with horror and disgust! that while I am preparing my wedding suit for a marriage with Lord Acreland, I cannot help meditating on the gloom of a sepulchre! there is nothing particularly disagreeable in the person of this husband whom my father has chosen for me; but I should have thought him far more amiable, had I been permitted to have made him the object of my own selection.

The wealth which Sir Edward has accumulated by days of labour and nights

of calculation, is at last appropriated—to what? To the purchase of a title for an only daughter! Thus will he ennoble his family by the sacrifice of one, whose happiness ought to be his first consideration. Oh! blind and mistaken parent; thou art the dupe of that ambition, which will only render thee an object of contempt to the wise, of pity to the compassionate. But I will endeavour to forget my approaching misery, and, if possible, give you some idea of our nuptial preparations.

The friendship subsisting between us, having commenced when we were both far distant from this country, precludes the knowledge you would otherwise have acquired respecting my family connections. I believe my good aunt Juliana is the only relation I have who is honoured with your esteem; she has merit to do justice even to discrimination exquisite as your's: she is doubly entitled to my affection, because she has had the happiness to conciliate your good opinion.

Our domestic circle is now embellished by the presence of my amiable relatives,

Sir

Sir Philip and Lady Watkins, with their adopted son, Charles Belmont. The worthy Baronet, whose mind exhibits all the qualities that can adorn the human heart, has been the doating husband of his amiable Fanny, for no shorter period than forty years, during which time, he declares, she never offended him in thought, word, or deed. Alas ! my friend ; their's was the union of sentiment, choice, and affection !

Lady Watkins was, in the middle of the century, a most formidable beauty : indeed so lovely, that the image her looking-glass presented was so fascinating as to prevent her ever altering the mode of dress, in which she was the object of universal adoration.

My father, whose ideas of happiness are as opposite to those of the venerable pair, as the blaze of the torrid zone to the dark plains of the frozen Zembla, seems to have no pleasure equal to that of contradicting them on every occasion. The good sense of Sir Philip, and the gentleness of my aunt's disposition, frequently

ly

ly defeat the severity, and even the ridicule of Sir Edward. For my own part, I never hear him utter an unkind or sarcastic expression without feeling the most extreme uneasiness ; neither can the mortification, which he sometimes occasions, produce half the impression on their minds, which it does on mine who am doomed to witness it.

The paraphernalia of the Hymeneal altar is already prepared :—my aunt Juliana wears a suit of white tabby, with Bruffells trimmings. Lady Watkins has a gold brocade in which she was presented at St. James's at least forty years since : Sir Philip is to appear in his wedding suit. What shall I exhibit ? A melancholy visage, the emblem of an undelighted heart ! Oh ! Louisa ; I never can consent to become the wife of Lord Acreland. Sometimes I determine to reject his addresses decisively ; but, alas ! my resolution fades before the stern injunctions of an inexorable father.

To-morrow we shall leave London for Oxfordshire. Lord Acreland is to follow
in

in a few days. I was once fond of Clarendon Abbey: I was once—but reflection cannot cure my present anguish, or bring back those scenes, which remembrance never fails to contrast with anticipated sorrows.

Oh, Fortune! thou art a cruel disposer of events; thou canst deny thy smiles to the children of Genius, whilst thou art lavish of thy favours to the selfish and ostentatious: how often dost thou feed the rapacity of the dull and vain, while the heart of inspiration throbs in obscurity! Thou art deaf to the plaintive voice of suffering merit, while thy ear is turned towards the flattering sons of dissipation and folly!

I wish Lord Acreland would accept my fortune, and leave me to seek for happiness in a more tranquil, though less brilliant, circle, than that to which I fear I am destined. I never envied the splendours of a court; I now begin to abhor them. I do not hate Lord Acreland; but I feel, I know that it is impossible I ever should teach myself to love him. Ah, Louisa!

is

is your friend at last to be the victim of indifference? Is not death preferable to such a sacrifice?

Adieu, adieu, you shall hear from me again very soon.

SOPHIA CLARENDON.

LETTER III.

Mrs. HORTON to SOPHIA CLARENDON.

Bath.

LORD Acreland! Is it possible that Lord Acreland has proposed himself as the husband of Sophia Clarendon? You cannot be serious! Either you are playing upon my credulity,—or he is deprived of reason. Your letter has awakened all the sensibility of my heart; it shudders with fear,—it freezes with horror!

I know Lord Acreland; I have long known him: I am also acquainted with his family,—his connections,—his very earliest connections;---he cannot,---dares not lead you to the altar;---reason, nature, justice,

justice, and humanity, forbid the alliance. Write to me instantly ;---tell me that you have finally determined to oppose his suit : say, that you have resolved not to sanctify a deed so miserably fordid : that no power on earth shall force you to barter all the generous feelings of a disinterested mind, at the shrine of pride, avarice, and duplicity. Sophia, Lord Acreland does not love you ; if he urges such a plea, for the gratification of his own necessities and your father's ambition, he is a wretch, and unworthy of the rank he holds in society.

Oh ! If I had the full power to explain my motives for this counsel, I could put a period to the business by only uttering a single sentence ; but, I am bound to secrecy ;---whatever reasons I may have for my solicitude, be assured, that they are serious and important. If you marry Lord Acreland, you are lost for ever !

Refuse his hand without hesitation ; if you value your peace of mind ; if you look forward, to long and honourable days ; if your heart acknowledges the
touch

touch of pity, do not contaminate its repose by such an union. There are miseries in store for the wife of Lord Acreland, of such a nature, that the veriest wretch, abandoned by heaven, and persecuted by pain, poverty, and sorrow, may be deemed happy in comparison with what she must encounter ! Make every effort to protract the fatal hour ; suffer me to see you before you embrace a destiny replete with anguish, that will only be terminated, when the groan of death issues from your bosom.

My agitation is not to be described ; my hand is almost convulsed with horror while I write ; my eagerness is such, that I shall fancy every moment an age, until I receive your answer. Alas ! Sophia ! I had rather weep over the marble that encloses you from the world for ever, than behold you, a living victim, forced to that altar, where all your hopes, and all your virtues, would be sacrificed to despair.

My health declines daily : I am ordered by my physicians to visit Bristol for the benefit of the waters. Your letter has
almost

almost annihilated my weak frame; every nerve shook with agony as I traced the anticipated progress of your destiny. The picture of your domestic circle, the delineation of the characters of your aunt, and her venerable partner, would have charmed me; but the wreath your fancy wove, was blended with such weeds of deadly poison, that the livelier flowers were all withered by its influence.

If you can so far command your mind, as to conceal your astonishment, you shall, when I dare be more explicit, receive a full elucidation of what must, for the present, rest in mystery: it is my duty to preserve you from misery; but I am not permitted to reveal the cause, why I am so urgent. You know my heart; it is incapable of dissimulation; it is warmly attached to your interest; it is tenderly concerned for your honour. Remember, Sophia, the day that gives your hand to Lord Acreland, will decide your fate---it will be, at once, terrible and sure!--

Farewel, my unfortunate friend! for even amidst the splendours that surround you,

you, I know no breathing creature, who so justly claims that appellation.

LOUISA HORTON.

LETTER IV.

Sir GEORGE FAIRFORD *to* Lord
ACRELAND.

Breconshire.

ALTHOUGH I tremble to continue a pursuit which seems to be of the most interesting nature, my friendship for you overpowers my scruples, and I resolve to exert my zeal for the completion of your wishes. If the person you describe, has all the grace and beauty your pen allows her, I shall have a dangerous task to undertake. You know I am a warm admirer of female perfection; and, if ever loveliness and merit appear with superior attraction, it is in the moment when sorrow is their companion; I always could resist the brilliancy of beauty, but when it is clouded with tears, I become a very coward.

On

On my arrival at the village where I now write, I alighted at a small public house, and was courteously greeted by my honest host, with a thousand expressions of respect, and as many protestations of zeal to accommodate me. Being ushered into a clean white-washed parlour, whose neatly sanded floor, and gayly decorated chimney, bespoke it no common resting place for ordinary travellers, I inquired of my obsequious guide, whether he could furnish me with pens, ink, and paper? Evidently mortified at so unprofitable a demand, he replied in the affirmative; not forgetting at the same time to present a bill of fare, with a bow that would have done credit to the most courtly circle.

“What will your Honour be pleased to eat?” cried my host of the White Lion.

“I want to write a letter,” answered I; when does the post go out for London?”

“Fine fowls, pork, and new laid eggs,” continued Boniface.

“I will trouble you to find a peasant;

I want

I want to send a message to a gentleman who resides in the neighbourhood."

"A pheasant! your Honour, I have not seen one for some time; would your Honour like a goose, which is, in my opinion, a finer bird; or will your Honour like a pork griskin: what shall I put before the fire?"

"A countryman;" continued I, still looking at my letter. My host viewed me with evident astonishment, and on my rising from my chair, darted out of the parlour as if he had seen a spectre.

I now heard a warm debate at the door of the alehouse. "I tell you he is mad," said the landlord; "the devil may wait on him before I will. Hang me if I don't believe he's a French jacobin, for now I think on't, there was a hand all covered with blood upon his chaise."

"Poh, you are a great fool," answered the simple shrew; "why the gentleman is as portly a gentleman, as ever wore a head, and can't be a French-man; who ever heard of a jolly French-man? Why, they are all as lean as rats."

"Non-

“ Nonsense ;” replied the husband, “ you’re a silly woman, and know nothing about the matter ; I don’t like his looks, and have a great mind to send for the justice ; who can tell but I may be sent to jail for harbouring such folk ; many a man has been tried for his life, for a less matter. No letter shall go out of my house, I can promise you :—why he looks for all the world like a foreigner.”

“ He looks like a handsome gentleman,” answered my hostess.

“ Handsome is, that handsome does,” said her sagacious husband. “ Why he has ordered nothing to eat, and the devil a drop has he called for, since he entered my doors ! I would not give a straw for such customers.---He does not pay for house-room :---one justice of the peace, or church-warden, will eat more at a meal, than twenty such gentry will in a month.”

“ What would you have quality guzzle like common people ?” said the landlady. “ Why they are quite other sort of things.”

“ That’s

“That’s sure enough,” answered the cautious landlord, “if one may judge by the few I have seen of ’em; but I can’t lose my time in squabbling with you, so one word for all. I shan’t harbour jacobins, nor spies, nor outlandish cattle of any sort. And if you take his part, you are no better than you shou’d be, and no friend to your king and country. And what’s more, if he doesn’t order a good dinner, in an hour from this time, I shall take my nag and be off to the justice’s. He shan’t live upon air, and impose upon free Britons, while I have a tongue in my head, and know what’s what.”

“Pray, my dear, let me go in and take the bill of fare; I’ll lay a wager he orders something in a trice, if I wait upon his honour;” said the gentle hostess.

“None of your palavering, mistress busy-body,” answered the angry host: “you are always for some nonsense or other; I saw you leering and sidling up to the stranger, as soon as he got out of his chaise: why do you think he’ll talk

talk to such a poor silly woman as you are, if he's a gentleman of any consequence? And, if he is not, he shan't play off his tricks upon a wife of mine, I can tell you. So get you in, and mind your kitchen, while I make another trial."

I now turned towards the window, where, to my infinite astonishment, I beheld a crowd of women and children, peeping through the casement with as much eager curiosity as though I had been an itinerant mountebank, or travelling magician. I rang the bell, which had more than once reminded me of dinner, by affailing my forehead as I crossed the parlour,---for it hung from the ceiling a most convenient memento to the hungry traveller. In came my prudent and loyal host of the White Lion; but not so graciously condescending as heretofore.

"Pray, landlord, did you ever hear of a lady residing in this part of the world, whose name is Sydenham?"

"A foreigner, your Honour?" answered the landlord.

"No, an English lady;" said I.

VOL. I.

C

"A

“A young lady, your Honour, or an old lady?”

“A person about five or six and thirty;” answered I.

“Ah! I can’t say I ever heard of such a lady.---Tall, or short, your Honour?”

“I really don’t know precisely,” answered I; “but I believe the person I wish to find, is very handsome.”

“Fair, your Honour, or brown?” said the landlord, stroking his chin, with a look of wonderful sagacity.

I perceived that he was only asking questions merely to satisfy his own curiosity, and cut the conversation short by ordering the bill of fare; it was out of his pocket instantaneously: the landlord rubbed his hands and smiled once more.---

“Pray,” said I, what houses have you in the village; are there any of consequence?”

“We have but few houses of any note, and please your honour,---only three, as far as I can recollect. The parsonage-house, the poor-house, and the public-house. The first is occupied by our curate

rate and his ten children. He is never within except at meals ; for he has got a bit of a field, which he has turned into a scrap of a garden, and he works there from sun-rise to sun-set."

A clergyman work in his field from sun-rise till sun-set !" answered I ; " I suppose it is his particular pleasure ?"

" Pleasure ! your Honour ! O, lack ! I'm afraid 'tis hard necessity ; for the honest soul has but thirty pounds a year, and does duty at two churches. What with digging and praying, the good man has a bitter time on't ! But as I was telling your Honour, there is the poor-house, full enough in all conscience ! and mad enough in all reason ! Why they are all turned Methodisses, and spin to psalm tunes, as though they were bewitched ; and they do nothing but cant and preach from year's end to year's end. Then they are grown so plaguy conscientious, they have turned the heads of half the village : 'tis wonderful, your Honour, how little ale I sell, since religion has got among us."

“ Well,” said I, interrupting him, “ this is nothing to the purpose. I want to send a few lines to Sir David Aprice, who, if I am not mistaken, resides in this neighbourhood.”

“ What will your Honour be pleased to have for dinner ?”

“ Have you nobody that can carry this letter ?” said I.

“ A fresh tap of fine ale, your Honour; and some excellent Herefordshire cyder: shall I bring your Honour a tankard, just to taste ?”

“ Bring me the devil !” said I, losing all patience. Before I could reproach myself for this hasty expression, the monarch of the White Lion had vanished from his post, and joined the crowd, which was still peeping through the window.

Perceiving no chance of forwarding my embassy, I resolved to sally forth, and make such inquiries as may finally conclude the object of my journey. I passed through the outward apartment, which served both for kitchen and tap-room. The landlord again presented the bill of fare.

fare. His countenance bore evident traits of hope, fear, and solicitude. "Get me a beef steak and a broil'd fowl," said I: in about half an hour I shall return."-- The wife host bowed most obsequiously; his countenance brightened, and I plainly perceived that the jacobin, the spy, the nag, - and the justice, were wholly forgotten.

By a little courtesy and consideration for the humours of mankind, how easy is it, thought I, to be at peace with all the human race! thus a few shillings has restored to me my good name. To those who condescend to study the mind of man, there is nothing so easily purchased as popularity.

I strolled through the village followed by a train of bawling children, who beheld an object of no small importance in a stranger of my description. A green leather cap and pantaloons rendered my figure as new and extraordinary in a Welch village, as though I had worn the three tails of a Turkish Bashaw, or the bear-skin suit of an Esquimaux Indian.

But all the din of mingling voices, all the half smothered titterings of the women, all the ejaculations of the children, could not obliterate the remembrance of the poor curate and his laborious family!

Reflection naturally turned towards the pampered sons of sanctity. The archbishop revelling in all the luxury of slothful ease, while the starving curate toils incessantly to earn the bare necessities of life! the pastor of his little flock, he looks not beyond the narrow circle that gives them a resting place! he has no splendour to maintain, no tribe of attendants to make up the empty shew of greatness: meekness and piety teach him to endure the miseries of penury, while they give to his mind the proudest gratification religion ought to feel: the conscious delight of devoting his labours to the benefit of his fellow-creatures, while he pursues, with modest manners, and with mental grace, the path to immortality!

Scarcely had I time to ruminate on the distresses of the poor curate, when I perceived that I had reached the turnpike-gate

gate at the entrance of the village. Here, said I to myself, here will I make the needful inquiries after the fair recluse. A decent looking old man sat at his post; he was reading a country newspaper; he lifted his hand to his spectacles, and displacing them from his face, rose to open the small gate which hung across the footpath. "Do not disturb yourself, my honest friend," said I; "I am younger than you are, and can open it myself."—"It is my duty, Sir," said he—and between us the gate was opened.

I passed through without replying; but recollecting the courteous old man, instantly turned back to recompence his civility.

"Bless your Honour!" said he, while his eyes were bent upon the half-crown piece I had put into his hand; "I will drink your Honour's health, and my little store will not be diminished by the tribute I pay to your generosity.—Heaven never fails to recompence the feeling heart! Will your Honour pledge me?"—He said no more; but entered

his hovel, and in a moment returned, with his clean brown jug, amply crowned with froth, that would have tempted any one to taste of his liquor. "Honest soul," said I, "the man who would not turn from a banquet to taste of thy jug, does not deserve thy blessing!"

"'Tis pure stuff, your Honour, and the mug is clean."

"'Tis excellent!" said I, "and thy heart is warm! may its source never be chilled by the churlish or ungrateful."—I returned it to his hands.

"Here's peace and prosperity to all the world," said the old gateman. After drinking, he continued—"O! this war is a cruel business, your Honour!"

"How can you suffer by it, my good fellow?" said I; "your situation cannot be materially affected by political events; what can you possibly lose by the war?"

With his sleeve he wiped away a tear that stole from the corner of his eye. "I have lost every thing," said he; "the staff of my age, the comfort of my days,

days, the helpmate of my labours. I have lost my only son! Oh! he was a brave lad, and a good son! I grieve sorely for his absence; my old eyes have shed many tears since he left me; but if he fights well, and falls gloriously——” He could not proceed.

“Never despair, my honest friend,” said I; “thy son will return, crowned with immortal laurels: let that idea console thee.”

“Ah! your Honour,” replied the old man, “if he had but been suffered to choose for himself I should have been satisfied. ’Tis a melancholy story.”

“Let me hear it,” said I. The old man rested his arm upon the gate, and I listened with a pre-sentiment which did not deceive me.

“Last Christmas eve,” said he, “my wife fell ill; and, after many struggles with her disorder, was at last confined to her bed, beyond the hope of recovery. My boy attended his mother by night and by day. Her illness, however, baffled all his care, and she

wasted hour by hour, till she was as slender, your Honour, as a shadow."

"Had she no medical advice?" said I.

"Yes, your Honour," replied he:

Mr. Lloyd, our curate, who is learned in physic, as well as divinity, came twice a day to see her; but all would not do: she was so changed, we could scarcely believe it was the same person. She was as pale as a corpse, your Honour, and as feeble as an infant."

Here the full heart bid the tongue pause, while the finer essence of sensibility rushed into the eyes. In a few moments he continued his narrative.

"May-day, in the morning, I never shall forget it, as we sat by her bedside, I beheld, through our little casement, all the villagers crowding to make merry. They sung and danced along; every heart was full of gladness, except mine and my poor boy's: he looked upon his mother, then on me, and then, taking her by the hand, he kissed it. 'Mother,' said he, 'I remember how merry you used to be on this

this day. You sung like the lark, and was up as early too.'

'I shall never sing again,' said she:—Heaven's will be done!' She then turned her head upon her pillow, and we were all silent.

"We were roused by the pipe and tabor, which were carried before the dancing villagers. 'God bless them!' said my wife; 'I do not envy their happiness. This is a world of affliction!'"—She sighed deeply, your Honour, as though the soul was departing from the body.

"Soon after, she fell into a profound sleep, and did not wake for three hours. When she thought herself refreshed, and better, she complained of hunger, and fancied that a new-laid egg would nourish her.

'You shall have one, if I die for it,' said her son; and without even waiting for her answer, he ran to the village. All the shops were shut, on account of the holiday. On entering the kitchen of the White Lion, the landlord in-

quired after my wife, and gave him the eggs, with hearty wishes for her recovery.

“Is thy mother sick, my lad?” said a stranger, who sat smoking his pipe near the window. “Here,” continued he, “take her a pint of wine; it will do her good.”

“My boy took the shilling from the stranger’s hand, and having purchased the wine, was joyfully preparing to return.

“The landlord will send thy liquor, my lad,” said the stranger, “but thou must serve the king.” The men-trappers rushed in, and they forced him away, your Honour, in spite of all his entreaties to take a last farewell of his dying mother.

“One of Mr. Lloyd’s sons came to tell me the sad news. He opened the door, and beckoned me to come out.—My mind misgave me.”

“Make haste with thy story,” said I; for, to speak honestly, my heart had caught

caught the contagious sorrow, and was beginning to discover its weakness.

“ Well, your Honour, then came Mr. Lloyd, and he broke the sad story to my poor wife.”

“ And what followed ?” said I, with earnest impatience : “ I hope she did not suffer much.”

“ Not much, your Honour, for that night she expired in my arms, calling on her poor son, and praying for his safety. On the next Sunday, I followed her to yonder church-yard, where I hope, when it shall please God, to rest for ever !”

“ Infatiable ambition !” said I : “ these are thy ravages ! thus to augment the power of a few individuals, thousands and tens of thousands perish unregarded.”

“ I will call in upon you again when I have taken some refreshment,” said I.—He opened the gate, bowed silently, and I returned to the White Lion.

Poor old man ! thought I to myself ; it was hard to take from thee thy only
com-

comfort; to deprive thee of a transient day of consolation; to plant thorns in the pathway which in a few paces will terminate by thy grave! Fate, untoward Fate! amongst the helpless millions who are destined to fall, that the more powerful may rise, could'st thou not have found a substitute for this *only* son—this prop of declining age? The soldier, who breathes his last groan on the field of honour has his country's cause at heart, and is released from worldly misery; he sees not approaching death, he only thinks of victory; but those that survive, those are the objects of our pity: what recompense have they? what balm to soothe the anguish of regret? None! The name they love, the hero of their little circle is only noticed in the list of political slaughters, and is then consigned to oblivion.

“What would your Honour drink?”
roused me from my reverie.

“What does your cellar afford, landlord?” answered I, for the first time raising my eyes, to observe my attendant, whose figure was so metamorphosed that
he

he exhibited no traces of his former self: his night-cap was succeeded by a well-powdered wig; his striped jacket and blue apron gave place to a glossy, light-coloured coat, with a waistcoat of a most striking pattern, somewhat similar to that which in my boyish days, as well as I can remember, adorned the hangings of my grandmother's bed-chamber.

He seemed flattered by my notice, and his eyes were involuntarily directed towards a looking-glass that hung opposite to where he stood. This is a village coxcomb, thought I: and why not? we have all our weak sides and our strong sides, our little vanities and our great deformities. This man may be, and I dare swear is, an honest soul: he is more vain of his person than of his heart; now, perhaps, I, who pretend to be a man of the world, have less vanity about personal qualifications, where I am his equal; and more about mental perfections, where most likely I am his inferior.

There is something strangely mischievous in the human race: we are perpetually

ally delighted in drawing forth the failings of our fellow-creatures. I confess I felt an irresistible propensity to ascertain this opinion, in the person of my village landlord, and instantly began my course of experiments.

His grotesque figure, which engrossed all his attention, was the first object of consideration. Flattery is pleasing, in proportion as it is judiciously applied: if too refined, it is not always understood; if too gross, it has the appearance of ridicule. Though some there are who will greedily swallow it, however it is sweetened with the honey of eloquence, or rendered picquant by the tartness of satire.

"You seem prepared for a county meeting, or some other public dinner," said I; "perhaps a feast of the justices, or turnpike commissioners, or ———" He smiled, and pulled down his gaudy waistcoat with an air of conceit exquisitely comical. "Neither one or the other, your Honour," said he; putting his leg forward with the grace of a dancer,

cer, conscious that my question proceeded from the alteration in his appearance. "We have little time for feasting, the county is all up in arms, as one may say, your Honour." Here he paused, to give me an opportunity of commending his wit. This I set down as the second item on the score of self-love.

"In arms! on what occasion?" said I.

"I can't see any occasion, your Honour, while his Majesty's subjects are loyal, and our enemies kept on the other side of the water. Odds my life! I could beat ten Frenchmen myself, at any time." Here my host modestly hinted that he was a wight of most valorous disposition.

"They have fought well, landlord," said I.

"No merit in that, your Honour: there every man fights for himself; but we fight for our betters; and surely 'tis more meritorious to labour for the good of others than to look for self-interested gratification."

A phi-

A philanthropist ! what virtue wilt thou next arrogate to thyself ? thought I.

“ But, as I informed your Honour, we are all armed, every man of us ; and a smart figure we cut, I assure your Honour, when we are all together : we have learnt many little genteel *mine-overs*, and we have a drum and a fife, and once a week are as merry as may be : though ’tis hard work, your Honour, to mind business and glory at the same time. But we have got through it pretty cheerfully as yet. Our mountains are rare fortresses ! The enemy will have bad sport, if they attempt to invade us ancient Britons.”

Vanity again ! “ But they have surmounted wonderful obstacles, landlord,” said I : “ they have displayed much valour, and more enterprise !”

“ Yes,” continued my host, “ but we are not to be easily driven from our post. Time out of mind, the Welch have been a valiant people ; and Heaven has been pleased to place us in a bulwark I trust impregnable.”

“ A Bri-

"A Briton's heart is the most invulnerable bulwark," said I; "and the spring of philanthropy flowing through its veins will not fail to temporise its natural powers of resistance, whenever the claims of human misery assail it."

"Ah! that's fine, that's noble, that's grand!" exclaimed my host; "but your Honour is a man of learning, no doubt. We have a smattering of something of the kind too; even from the time of the Druids, we have been looked upon as a learned race."

"Learning has little to do with valour," answered I; "we have seen generals who cannot write; indeed, I much doubt if they can read either, or they would have blushed at the nonsense which bore their signature. Believe me, my honest friend, a man, now-a-days, may be a perfect Hannibal, without ever treading the paths of literature."

"I'm of your opinion, your Honour," answered my host; "Englishmen have

no business in foreign countries; they should look at home; they will have enough to do, I warrant you: they will only learn French fashions by travelling; and outlandish doctors won't be able to mend a British constitution, with all their nostrums, try what they will, your Honour. For my part, I can't abide 'em, since they cut off the heads of their king and queen; had it been any body else, I should not have thought much about it."

"As individuals, I lament their fate, landlord; yet they were but mortals, and one life is as dear to the possessor as another. The king was a good man, I believe; and I am sorry for his sufferings: but 'tis the profligacy of the great that poisons the minds of the little."

"That's sure enough, your Honour," answered my host; "and so I tell my wife, when she goes flaunting to church, dressed up like a puppet-show; while the parson's daughters are as nice as my nail, and as clean as a penny!

To

To be sure, they learnt a good deal of a Londoner, that used to lodge at the parsonage; a poor lady that was a little beside herself, as a body may say."

"Did you know her name?" said I, eagerly.

"Yes, your Honour, her name was Arundal: she had all the ways of a person of quality, I assure your Honour; she was modest, genteel, and as civil spoken to poor folks as though she had been one herself: then she was so charitable! why she used to go poking into all the little cottages, to see the sick, and she would cry like a baby, when she heard their complaints. Oh! yes, she was quite a lady of quality, every inch of her."

I could not help smiling at the simplicity of the honest fellow. Ah! thought I, my loquacious friend, how little dost thou know the nature of what thou callest "a lady of quality!"

"You have some fine antiquities in Wales," answered I.

Now,

Now, if there is truth in what Locke affirms, that all our ideas are linked in one chain of connection, how easily did my thoughts jump from virtue in nobility to the grandeur of ancient times; when hospitality sanctified what chance had bestowed, and those who were called the great, by actions established their right to the title.

“Yes, your Honour,” said the landlord, “there is here in the neighbourhood an old castle, which they say belonged to Lewellin, in the reign of Edward the First. Lord help us!—they do tell strange stories about it.—’Tis a noble ruin; that is to say, part of it, for one end of the castle is fitted up by the poor mad lady I was speaking of: nobody in their senses would live in it, for it is troubled with evil spirits.”

“A mad lady!” answered I: “what has occasioned her derangement?”

“Heaven knows!” replied my host; but she has lived there going on seven years:

years: she has only one servant, an old body belonging to our village."

"Can I see her?" said I.

"She seldom ventures out, your Honour, and then she only wanders by moon-light, near her own solitary habitation. They call her the lady of the mountain. She now goes by no other name."

"I will stay," said I, "to night, and endeavour to see her; she awakens my curiosity. Are you certain that her name is Arundal?"

"Quite certain, your Honour; I know her as well as can be: she is very quiet and sensible spoken, when she is not in one of her comical humours."

Gracious God! thought I, such is the prejudice of education, that this fellow denominates the greatest of human calamities comical! My heart shudders even to think of that which to him is the subject of jocularity.

"Well," said I, "you must tell me the road, and I will walk towards the
haunted

haunted castle ; I feel extremely interested in this lady's fortunes."

" Fortune ! Lord bless your Honour," replied my landlord, " she has no fortune : why she has lost her wits ; and who would entrust any thing to the care of a mad body ? But if you've a mind for a bit of a frolic, I can accommodate you with a bed, and to-night 'tis very likely you may see the poor soul."

My meal being finished, I could not resist the impulse I felt to make a second visit to the old gateman. I rose from my chair, still ruminating on what I had just heard ; but was interrupted by—" What would your Honour be pleased to order for supper ?" and again the bill of fare was humbly presented.

" Any thing, landlord," said I ; " I am no great supper eater." This intelligence cast a momentary cloud over the features of the intelligent Boniface. I felt no pleasure in his mortification, and therefore ordered a couple of pigeons,
4 and

and such cold meat as the larder afforded.

"Mind," said I, "that my bed is well aired."

"It was slept in last night, your Honour; our justice of the peace, who lives about three miles off, generally sleeps here after a club dinner, which happens once a month. Poor gentleman! he's as good a man as ever broke bread: but, what with eating, and what with drinking, he is always put to bed by sun-set. He's a very model for our country 'squires. He rides hard, works hard, drinks hard; and, when it is necessary, is a little hard of hearing. 'Twas but at the last meeting he put an exciseman in the stocks, for getting drunk, and swearing. 'Damn the fellow,' says his worship, can't he keep his tongue from bad words? Why the blockhead wastes all his time in swearing and swilling!—Drinking is the worst of all crimes: a man that drinks his senses away is no longer reasonable."

I perceived no probability of an end to this wise harangue, and therefore, without ceremony, left my host in the middle of his story.

I found my venerable guard still at his post. He was smoaking his pipe, his mug of ale was placed on a bench beside him. The evening was pleasant, the prospect from the turnpike beautiful and sublime! The valley presented a long track of verdant meadow land, which was bounded on each side by stupendous mountains, their summits hidden with clouds, through which the rays of the declining sun penetrated, in columns of brilliant light, which, as they descended towards the base of the mountains, gave the green turf the brightness of the emerald. The slope, which was skirted by a winding narrow wood, was sprinkled over with sheep and goats, and here and there a shepherd boy sat on the declivity, singing or whistling, as his fancy or occupation permitted.

“This,” said I, “is a delightful spot! Were I lord of the manor, I think I should

should not envy any man living; whose estate is this?"

"Sir David Aprice's," answered the old man. "His Honour has three thousand a year, fee simple, within a ren."

"With three thousand a year, much good may be done," said I.

The old man shook his head. "Hospitality is out of fashion, your Honour," answered he, "Sir David seldom visits his tenants; he only comes amongst us at Christmas, for a fortnight; and then, to be sure, he does cloath ten poor old women; he bestows his bounty here in the village, and 'tis wonderful to see what crowds throng from all parts of the country to witness the ceremony."

"Is charity so rare amongst you," said I, "that one good action excites so much curiosity?"

The old man sighed, as he struck the embers out of his pipe, and we sat down on his door bench together. The sun was just sinking beneath the horizon: the grey and crimson clouds, bordered with glittering gold, adorned the west, while the

tinkling sheepfold bell faintly echoed from the adjacent mountain. The dark woods now assumed a deeper hue, by being contrasted with the reflection of the gaudy sky, in a smooth sheet of water at a small distance. I contemplated the surrounding scene with pensive admiration. But I could trace nothing like a ruin; every thing was perfect! Beautiful, transcendent nature shone in all its proud perfection! "Happy is the philosopher," said I, "who can enjoy the feast of mental luxury.—Mental! that word reminds me of the poor maniac, the solitary tenant of these mountains. Do you know such a one?"

"I have often seen her, Sir; she lives in the ancient castle just between yonder hills. If you will stand upon this bench, you will see the top of a black tower, 'tis there she dwells."

I obeyed his direction and plainly discovered a dark grey tower, rising above a thick wood, which separated two mountains, the battlement appeared to be partly covered with ivy, the sun's last beam

shone

shone upon the spot, and seemed to point out the abode of the forlorn recluse.

I must seal my packet, you shall hear from me again to-morrow; and, as I travel to read mankind, and to make observations, you may expect a continuation of events from,

Dear Acreland,

Your's faithfully,

GEORGE FAIRFORD.

LETTER V.

SOPHIA CLARENDON to Mrs. HORTON.

Crutched Friars.

MY friend, what have you done? Your letter has bewildered my mind in such a maze of perplexing ideas, that I scarcely know what to think, or how to answer you. Be assured, I will not consent to be the wife of Lord Acreland: my determination is such as no mortal power can over-rule; your impressive manner of writing would, alone, serve as the basis

of such a resolution. What my sentiments are, you shall see exemplified by my future conduct.

My good aunt, Lady Watkins, is slightly indisposed, therefore, as my father has some particular business to adjust with his lawyer, he has kindly deferred our journey into Oxfordshire for a few days. Sir Edward is eager for the celebration of my marriage; indeed, if I have any penetration, much more so than Lord Acreland himself. He is too refined, and too well bred, to care much about any thing; in that respect, as far as concerns this detested union, we are of opinions perfectly similar.

My father thinks of nothing but what he calls, my elevation; he talks of nothing, but of quartering his arms with a peer of the realm! Alas! my happiness seems to have no place in the extensive plans of his ambition. Oh! my friend, my counsellor, I will not add to the degraded phalanx of mercenary victims; I will not bear the name of him, whose coronet

ronet would be sullied with my repentant tears!

We are all zealous in obtaining a pretext to avoid that which our hearts condemn, and the trembling timidity of youth is easily subdued, by the sanction of those whom we esteem. You authorise me to reject Lord Acreland, and I embrace your counsel with delight. The disparity of our years is not more marked, than the dissimilarity of our souls: such an alliance could produce nothing but misery. Pedigree, titles, and wealth, are, in Sir Edward's opinion, treasures of such inestimable value, that the humbler order of beings cannot fail to view them with envy and admiration. Destructive doctrines! I know not which they merit most, from liberal and enlightened minds,—contempt, or pity!

Hereditary distinctions are more frequently the gifts of accident, than the rewards of virtue; while chance has the power of bestowing external greatness on beings debased by all the littleness of ignorance, arrogance, and folly, can it be a

matter of surprise, that individuals so distinguished look with contempt on the graces of intellectual worth, and disdain the labour of cultivating even those talents which nature has bestowed upon them?

It would be equally cruel and unjust to affirm that every man of high rank is an idiot, as to say that every child of poverty is a knave: yet, the former is more culpable in neglecting to improve his talents, than the latter in deviating from the laws of honesty: because the one triumphs over mankind with impunity, while the other is punished by those laws, which he has had the temerity to violate; I really do not know which I had rather encounter,—the cunning of a villain, or the arrogance of a fool.

I am impatient to hear from you; tell me, Louisa, if any thing like humanity still characterises your nature, tell me, why you are so strongly interested in my decision respecting Lord Acreland?

Oh! how my heart pants for the solitudes of Clarendon Abbey, the hanging woods,

woods, the grotto, the hermitage! All my favourite retreats will combine to afford consolation at this painful juncture.

My uneasiness on account of your health is extreme; make every effort, I conjure you, for its restoration: remember, my amiable friend, this busy world is not overcharged with virtue: and do not suffer neglect to rob it of one of its proudest ornaments!

Why will you not be explicit respecting Lord Acreland? Why will you not give me a fair, handsome, and unequivocal plea, for a decided refusal? I know, that I shall be thought capricious; that I shall incur the displeasure of my father; that I shall be destitute, and exposed to a thousand mortifying reproaches; yet, Heaven will grant me that patience, and inspire me with that fortitude, which would forsake me amidst the degradations of an interested marriage. I look upon the woman who sacrifices her delicacy, by bartering her favours for the gratification of her avarice, as a base and detestable being; but when I reflect on the solemn oath

pledged at the altar of the Divinity, to love a being whom the soul abhors, I shrink from a woman capable of such perjury, and consider her, as the most unpardonable criminal !

Yet, how often do we behold the most accomplished females sell themselves, for I can allow the sacrifice no gentler term, to age, profligacy, and caprice ! The most wretched, the most fallen of our sex, cannot debase themselves more decidedly. One of our most celebrated dramatic writers says, “ There may be a legal prostitution, as well as a licentious one.”* I never will become a voluntary victim ; and, thank heaven, the laws of my country place me beyond the reach of compulsion.

My father has the free disposal of my fortune ; but my mind is still unshackled ! I may be driven from his house ;—stung by his reproaches, condemned by the world ; but will there not be virtue in resistance ? If I consented to marry Lord Acreland, I should detest him ; I should consider him in no other light, than that

* Cumberland.

of my destroyer; I should shrink from his gaze, as the slave does from his tyrant; I should be the purchased object of his fancy, the legal mistress of his caprice; the disgrace of my family,—and perhaps, at last, the victim of some beloved seducer!

How many instances have we seen, where the purest sentiments have been contaminated, and the most correct morals polluted, by sordid and unpitiful parents!

Rest assured, Louisa, that no allure-ment, no threat, no persuasion, shall ever induce me to be the wife of Lord Acreland. As soon as the writings are completed, which are intended to transfer me like a piece of rich merchandise, we shall proceed to Clarendon Abbey: my aunt Juliana, Lady Watkins, and Sir Philip, will be of our party. They are all fond of me, and are consequently averse to a marriage, for which they know my father's motives, yet all their united eloquence would not influence his opinion: ambition is a mania for which there is no anti-

dote; all the graces of nature; all that refines humanity, fade before its triumphs! While the blood of devoted millions only serves to bathe the altar, at which hope, tenderness, and pity, are sacrificed, to gratify the thirst of the insatiate monster!

Adieu, Louisa.

SOPHIA CLARENDON.

LETTER VI.

CHARLES BELMONT *to the Reverend Mr.*
JONES.

London.

THE inhabitant of a new world, with a mind scarcely reconciled to the change it has experienced, I steal from a surrounding chaos, and joyfully dedicate an hour to the friend of my heart, the tutor of my earliest days!

What a scene do I now behold! How shall I describe it? How shall I delineate particular features, where the whole is in-

com-

comprehensible and astonishing? This busy part of the creation is a mingling mass of profusion and avarice; the former eager to throw away what the latter incessantly toils to acquire. I observe in the general outline of this new society more cunning than liberality; more vanity than virtue; more plausibility than truth; warm professions from cold hearts; and minds, warped by sordid self-interest, exulting over modest merit; and ignorance, "drest in a little brief authority," throwing the veil of envy over the pale visage of desponding genius! Such is the picture of those with whom I am destined, either to pursue the path to affluence and honour, or to lament for ever my separation from you and from tranquillity.

I will not say I envy you, because envy cannot hold a place in my heart; but certain it is, that I shall often look back with a mixture of pain and satisfaction, on the days I passed amidst your mountains. I shall retrace the changes of every season, the occupation of every hour. The bleak winter morning when the sports of the

field led us forth to exercise and health ; the pleasures and disappointments that awaited our pursuits ; our return at the close of the evening ; our guiltless merriment over our well-earned repast. Then the opening spring, the progress of returning summer, the breezy hill, the expanding foliage, the fields where promised plenty cheered the hearts of the peasantry ; the glowing dawn, when we brushed the dew from the long spangled grass—or listening to the lark, angled beside some rapid stream ; so occupied, how often did we pity the giddy, and condemn the wise, who, lost in the mingling mazes of society, and bewildered by the duplicity of the world, could hope for mental delight in the paths of business, or conscious repose on the couch of dissipation. Oh ! my friend, I then talked of what I now feel !

I shall often dream of my accustomed seat at the foot of the mountain.—That shade, in my days of childhood, I planted with poplars, and carpetted with turf. I shall, in fancy, muse beside the lake, and mark the light breeze quivering across its surface,

surface, while the reflection of the hanging woods casts a deep gloom along the margin of the opposite shore. But how shall I lament the separation from my daily haunt, the cottage of poor Morgan, my earliest friend.—Enough of this; I was not born for a life of indolence: I am destined to toil with millions of my fellow creatures, through scenes more busy, but far less pleasing, than those which, perhaps, I have relinquished for ever.

The generous protection, the unceasing regard I have experienced from Sir Philip Watkins, made me readily acquiesce in any proposal he thought fit to make, that was consistent with my own honour. I have ever been a dependant on his bounty; therefore, by every sentiment of gratitude, I am bound to obey him: as an orphan, he adopted me,—as a son, I am united to him by love, duty, and respect.

The plan of life which this worthy patron has chosen for me, is not, in every respect, congenial to my wishes; I shudder at the idea of pursuits, which are to be guided wholly by self-interest. I should
have

have preferred the service of my country; the field of conquest, or the grave of honour! The active faculties of my mind are ill suited to the sober, uninteresting scenes of traffic; but, Sir Philip urges the sacrifice, and I am determined to comply with his injunctions.

I am now the domesticated friend of Sir Edward's family; he has given me the kindest reception; and I am destined to pass the next four years of my existence, under his patronage and in the cultivation of commercial knowledge.

I did not exactly comprehend Sir Philip's motive for desiring my immediate attendance in London; or, probably I might have remonstrated on the subject, and have chosen a line of life, more active, and more congenial to my sentiments. Fame has warmed my heart even from the hours of childhood. I have heard the name of monarch without emotion; but the hero's feats,—the soldier's laurel,—or the triumphs of victory,—never failed to make my breast glow with emulation!

O! ye

O! ye stupendous mountains! ye lakes! ye vallies! ye straw-roofed cottages! ye habitations of unambitious virtue! I shall behold ye no more: I am doomed to toil for gold,—accursed gold! To pore over the dull page of sordid calculation;—like the lynx to watch; like the harpy to devour! I must taste that opiate, which will teach me to forget all the human race, and think only of myself; I must gaze in that mirror which will present a false reflection;—which will shew me the man of wealth, decked in the robe of respectability, while a shield of gold covers an heart formed of impenetrable stone!

To you I am indebted for my education; you have enlightened my mind, you have taught me to consider unsullied honour, as the proudest distinction man can enjoy. I will do credit to your precepts, and may I perish when I cease to follow your example!

Sir Edward Clarendon is what the world calls an honest man, that is to say, he is indefatigable in the accumulation of riches. He is also a man of consequence, because

because he is one of the wealthiest merchants in the city of London ; still there is a vulgar ostentation about him, that, were he any other than my friend, and my dear Lady Watkins's brother, would, to me, be insupportable. I have entered into no written engagement respecting my residence with him, and therefore hold myself free to terminate the connection, whenever it ceases to be pleasant to either party.

I only know the world by books, and they have hitherto given me no idea of what I now behold ; we have two distinct classes of people in this vast metropolis ; the courtly race are not more opposite to the citizens, in situation, pursuits, and appearance, than in sentiments and manners : both parties have their attractions and their failings. The profligate young nobleman doats on ostentation, loves to be thought more dissipated than he really is ; affects singularity in dress and in conversation ; he neither walks, talks, or laughs, like a sober cit ; his enjoyments are trifling, his pursuits uninteresting ; his
appear-

appearance fantastic, and his friendship uncertain; while all his attachments proceed either from fashion or self-love. He begins his career as a bark puts to sea, with propitious gales. He glides smoothly on, gaudy, and freighted with a profusion of treasure. The storms of life shortly assail him, he is borne at the will of every blast; now lifted to the skies, now sinking in the gulph of misery; till, like a shattered wreck, he recedes from light, and leaves nothing but an empty title for his successor.

The plodding citizen is educated in the laborious arts of traffic; he passes the day in the pursuits of riches; he dreams of profit and of loss. If fortune smiles upon his toil, his next hope is the aggrandizement of his name, by an alliance with some illustrious family. He then fancies himself ennobled; and in every society arrogates to himself something of superior distinction: talks of his daughter's consequence, or his son's nobility; lives in a sort of second rate magnificence, and, at his death, leaves a sum of money to erect
a mo-

a monument, on which his name, his charities, if ever he bestowed any, and his relationship to my Lord Duke or her Grace, are blazoned by the hand of history; while she weeps to see the attributes of Fame pilfered to adorn the relics of departed dullness.

Let me not draw this portrait for the whole race; there are some, who support, by integrity and benevolence, the name of a British merchant! Who ornament the sphere in which they move; while, by the rectitude and honour of their lives, they place the empty claims of hereditary titles, far, very far in the shade of oblivion!

The amiable Miss Clarendon is the destined wife of Lord Acreland; an union so strangely unequal, marked by such a vast disparity of age, and such a still more striking contrast of character, cannot fail to awaken astonishment! She is lovely and accomplished; I hope, heaven knows the sincerity of my soul, I hope she will be happy.

She is all gentleness and complacency; her mind is richly stored with knowledge,
and

and she is the only unaffected woman of talents I have met with since my residence in London. Her taste for music is exquisite; and she has, more than once, requested me to accompany her on the piano fortè! My voice appears worse than usual, since I have attempted to mingle its tones with those of Miss Clarendon; there is something peculiarly soothing in her harmony, something that perpetually conveys the idea of celestial sounds!—But every thing she does is perfect;—and if there is a being upon earth whose lot is to be envied, that being is, unquestionably, Lord Acreland.

Farewel, my friend, my monitor; when you think of me, let it be with esteem, and when I act unworthily, banish from your thoughts, for ever,

CHARLES BELMONT.

LETTER

LETTER VII.

*Miss JULIANA PENGWYNN to Mrs.
HORTON.*

Wimpole Street.

HOW shall I find words, my dear Madam, to express my mortifications and disappointments ! After having dedicated all the spring of my days to the education of my niece Sophia, I am at last treated by Sir Edward as though I had been his dependant, kindly appointed by him as the travelling Duenna of his amiable daughter : but I am disgusted with his overbearing pomposity, and had I not promised to visit the abbey at the approaching nuptials, I really believe I should wholly relinquish his society. A woman of my family and experience is not to be led like an infant; Sir Edward owes all his consequence to the Pengwynns, and they are of too ancient a lineage

lineage to crouch before upstarts of any description whatever.

Miss Clarendon, thank Heaven, is well educated; she has travelled, she has read: she knows the world, and her talents claim my esteem; but the blustering, rude, disagreeable, money-breeding savage, her father, will drive every thing like taste and literature from his dwelling: indeed I question if the darkest ages ever produced so uninformed and arrogant a being.

It grieves me to the soul, when I reflect on the injustice of fortune, in heaping treasures on such an uncultivated brute, when it is well known that some of the most illustrious characters, ancient and modern, have perished in want! Did not Homer recite his divine poetry in the public streets for bread? Did not Plautus, the great comic poet, earn a livelihood by turning a mill-stone? Was not the learned Xilander obliged to sell his notes upon Dyonisius Cassius for a mess of pottage? Then, is it not a scandal to humanity that such an illiterate grub as Sir
Edward

Edward should feed on all the luxuries of life? I blush to observe that, by one dull, plodding course of traffic, he has amassed countless wealth, when Paul Borghefe, the Italian poet, who knew fourteen different trades, could not even procure the means of subsistence: is it not dreadful to behold an ill-mannered cub, revelling in the midst of profusion, when it is a known fact that the immortal Cervantes perished in extreme poverty? Who, without shame, can anticipate the day when Sir Edward Clarendon's monumental honours will fill a niche in the temple of the All Good! though the enlightened Cardinal Bentivoglio, the ornament of Italy, and the Belles Lettres, did not leave a sum sufficient even to lay him in the earth! Those are instances among the *littérateurs* of other countries: but we have had more striking examples of suffering genius even in this land of reputed hospitality! Its annals will be darkened by the hand of pity, as she transcribes the names of Dryden, Otway, Savage, Collins, Chatterton, and Lloyd!

Nay,

Nay, did not the sublime Milton sell his Paradise Lost for the paltry sum of ten pounds? a sum which Sir Edward Clarendon gives for a turtle, or a few pine-apples! Oh! my blood thrills through my veins, when I think of such injustice!

Three days since I condescended to call in Crutched Friars: I wanted to see my niece, and not her father; but, as my ill stars would have it, I was ushered into the drawing-room, where I found Sir Edward with his lawyer, reading over a skin of parchment—the bill of sale of his devoted daughter. I could not restrain my indignation, and therefore addressed him in the language of the immortal Shakespeare:

“O the fierce wretchedness that glory brings us!
“Who would not wish to be from wealth exempt,
“Since riches point to misery and contempt?”

This was as unintelligible to his ears as a Greek ode, or an eulogium on humanity; he only answered me by an imper-

continent sneer, and the word "silence," so loudly vociferated, that I really thought I should never again recover my hearing.

Poor Sophia! I really grieve to see the dear child, after all the pains I have taken to fashion her mind, given away in so unfeeling a manner. My Lord Acreland is but an insignificant personage; he has no more learning than a Hottentot: as for Sir Edward, he understands nothing but eating; and the only merit he has, is that of never venturing beyond the limits of his knowledge.

Now, my dear Madam, the chief motive of this letter is to influence your mind in favour of my opinion; to induce you, for the sake of humanity, to dissuade my niece from this abominable marriage. There is a person in the world who is dear to us all; he would be the properest husband for Sophia; with him she would be happy: such an union would gratify her uncle, Sir Philip Watkins — would delight his amiable wife, and

and give infinite pleasure to, dear Madam,

Your most obedient

Humble Servant,

JULIANA PENGWYNN.

LETTER VIII.

SOPHIA CLARENDON to *Mrs.* HORTON.

London.

MY destiny is not to be averted! Sir

Edward is determined, I am a coward, and the remainder of my days will be devoted to wretchedness! The cruelty of his decision will not afflict me long; the grave will afford me that repose which a father's ambition would wrest from me for ever.

Yesterday, while I was selecting some music which I meant to take with me, my father entered my dressing-room. "Everything is settled," said he, with an air of

exultation; "and you have nothing to do now but to prepare your wedding-finery, and accustom yourself to the new dignities that will shortly adorn you."

"Adorn me, Sir!" answered I. "Can the absurd trappings of fashion lend my mind a single ray of lustre? Do you think the title of my husband can give me consequence?"

"Unquestionably," replied Sir Edward; "Miss Clarendon is a very different personage from what she will be, when she bears the title of Countess of Acreland!"

"In what respect, Sir?" answered I. "Can the high-sounding name you have contrived to purchase for me, render me more amiable in discerning eyes? Do you suppose the varnish of nobility will hide the insignificance of my origin? Will your honour, or my happiness, be enhanced by this ridiculous alliance?"

"Much, very much," replied my father; "a name is every thing."

"It

"It will, indeed, Sir, be every thing in the present instance," said I: "but is not peace of mind worth cultivating?"

"And will you not possess all that can make a woman happy?" answered Sir Edward: "a noble mansion, a long train of domestics, splendid carriages, magnificent jewels, precedence, illustrious connections, brilliant society, an enormous marriage settlement, and a luxurious table? Will you not dance at St. James's, be invited to the first parties in the kingdom—dress more magnificently—excite more envy, and be more exalted, than any of your city associates? Then, when you come to Crutched Friars with a coronet on your coach, will not the whole street be in an uproar? Why, girl, where is your father's greatness of soul?"

"Where, indeed," said my aunt Juliana, who at that moment entered the room.

"None of your sarcastic impertinence, Miss Juley," said Sir Edward; "I am not to be taught by you."

“No, nor by any body else,” answered my aunt: “you are—in short, I know what you are.”

“So do I, Mistress Wisdom,” said Sir Edward; “I am the richest merchant that ever wore a head.”

“Ridiculous!” answered my aunt.—“Wasn’t there Cæcilius Isidorus, who died worth three millions of money?”

“What was he? a Jew broker?” replied Sir Edward.

“No; he was a Roman citizen,” answered my aunt; “he possessed more wealth than all your fraternity: he left four thousand one hundred and sixteen slaves behind him!”

“I thought he got his money in the slave trade,” replied my father, “by his being so rich.”

“Poh! you are as ignorant as you are selfish,” said my aunt: “your conduct is a scandal to humanity; and I only lament that the Pengwynns ever condescended to mingle their blood with the low lineage of such—but I won’t disgrace myself by being out of temper.

Yet

Yet I wonder at you, Sir Edward, and I grieve too, when I think of the sacrifice you are about to make of this poor dear child.—Never was there so preposterous a union since the first marriage ceremony, in the reign of Cecrops.”

“Damn Cecrops!” said Sir Edward. “What do I care for Cecrops? You are always bothering your hearers with your learning, and such nonsense, which nobody understands. What have I to do with Cecrops?—I never heard of such a fellow.”

“How should you?” answered my aunt, with indignation. “Cecrops was King of Athens: nobody will do you the injustice to suppose that you have much knowledge of the ancients.”

“No, Miss Juley, I leave the ancients to themselves,” said my father; “and if they returned the compliment, I should be less troubled with your company; and let me tell you, once for all, your advice is not wanted: Miss Clarendon will not refuse Lord Acreland, if she regards the dignity of her family.”

“My regard for the dignity of my family,” answered I, “will ever be evinced in the tenor of my conduct: but, Sir, will you persuade me that the daughter of Lady Clarendon, well educated, and irreproachable, can be ennobled by the possession of a paltry title? Is Lord Acreland, whose age might entitle him to the appellation of father, the husband with whom I can hope for happiness? Shall I not be considered by his relations as his inferior in birth? And will not my family connections be the subject of ridicule for his, because they are less exalted, though not less virtuous?”

Sir Edward paused.

“No matter for that,” answered he; “you can at any time tell them that the Clarendons, of Clarendon Abbey, possess more wealth than all their generation.”

“Heavens, Sir!” said I: “is my home to be a scene of such reproaches? Am I to conciliate the regard of new relatives, by comparing their honours with the treasures of my family? You will be

con-

convinced of my wretchedness when it is too late. You will repent your severity when I am the victim."

"So did the Athenians repent their persecution of Socrates," said my aunt; "but I fear Sir Edward will not share the fate of Melitus!"

"Zounds! what are you broke loose again, old wiseacre?" replied Sir Edward, with a voice that made my good aunt tremble. "Will nothing stop that eternal torrent of gibberish and nonsense?"

"You are an ill-mannered savage," said my aunt: "a little dirty dross has turned your brain; and your ambition will render you an object of contempt. Remember the fate of Cassius Spurius."

"I hate every thing spurious," answered Sir Edward; "and I hate old maids—and I hate learning; and now you have heard my opinion, I advise you to decamp, before I shew you the shortest way."

"For Heaven's sake, Sir," said I, "consider what you are doing. My

aunt is only zealous for my happiness : she knows that I cannot love Lord Acreland ; and however I may be flattered, by being the object of his choice——”

“ Nay,” interrupted Sir Edward, “ for that part of the business, child, you are indebted to me : I first brought his Lordship to a declaration, by informing Lady Arranford what your fortune would be ; and that I was determined never to give you a shilling, unless you married a man of rank and title ; my Lord took the hint, and proposed accordingly : so that you see there was no great obligation to him on that score.”

Shocked at this new proof of my wretched situation, and convinced that my fortune alone influenced Lord Acreland, my indignation almost overpowered my patience, and I could not forbear telling Sir Edward that I never should love a being whose mind was contaminated by such illiberal motives.

“ I can't help that,” said my father ;
“ you should have thought of that business
ness

ness before. You never told me that you could not love Lord Acreland."

"You never questioned me on the subject, Sir," answered I; "but since you are kind enough to hear my opinion, I now declare, that I never can consent to such degradation."

"What!" replied Sir Edward, while his face reddened with resentment; "after I have settled every thing! after I have promised his Lordship that you should marry him in a fortnight! Let me hear no more of such absurd conduct.—

Are you not my daughter? Have I not given you an education equal to that of any lady in the land? And have I not a right to dispose of my own? From your infancy, I meant that you should marry amongst the nobility: I have had my eye on Lord Acreland these seven years, and am determined not to be disappointed. A pretty business, truly! things are come to a fine pass, if daughters are to controul their father's opinions. I suppose you are for love and a cottage: this comes

of reading romances;—women have no business ever to read—or to write either.”

“ Oh! Agenor! King of Phœnicia,” exclaimed my aunt, “ thou wert proud of thy daughter, when she first taught the Latins the art of writing. Had Europa been a citizen’s heiress, she would have remained in ignorance.”

“ Will you hold your tongue, Miss Pengwynn?” said Sir Edward; “ or shall I make you? I can’t give Sophy a lesson on her duty, but you must trump up an old canting tale about kings, and such stuff.”

“ Brother! you speak treason!” answered my aunt: “ absolute treason!—why you will bring yourself to an untimely end, if you indulge in such seditious conversation. I don’t think it safe to remain under your roof.”

“ Thank God!” said Sir Edward; “ I have at last found out the way to get quit of you.”

I could have wept to hear him utter so harsh an expression, and replied—“ Really,

ly, Sir, you treat my good aunt shamefully. The respect I entertain for her virtues and her talents, will not suffer me to remain a silent witness of such cruelty."

"You are mad—as mad as she is!" replied Sir Edward: "I have always thought your brain was touched, since I caught you scribbling poetry in the hermitage at the Abbey. Wasn't I obliged to have the two panes taken out of the window, that you may not be exposed to all the world? Did old Cyclops teach you that, too?"

"I really do not comprehend you, Sir," said I.

"Then I will speak plainer," answered Sir Edward. "Didn't you write verses on Independence, with a diamond, on the north window of the hermitage?—Profligate girl! what have you to do with independence?"

"Very little indeed, Sir," answered I.

"Are you not obliged to me," continued my father, "for your daily subsistence? Do you know that independence

is

is a sort of freedom—and freedom is liberty—and liberty spurns all constraint, as a body may say ! Now let me ask you what sort of character a young lady must have who avows her contempt for all the bounds of decorum ? Then didn't I find in the library a sonnet, in the manner of Petrarch ? I have made inquiries who this Petrarch was, and am ashamed to think that a daughter of mine should imitate such a profligate !”

“ Sir !” said I, with infinite astonishment, “ Petrarch was an Italian poet of great celebrity.”

“ I know that,” answered Sir Edward ; “ but wasn't he in love with a married woman ? Oh ! scandalous ! I wish it had been a wife of mine—he should have wrote his lamentations in Bridewell. A poet, truly ! why your poets are all beggars : shew me one that has a title. You can't—I defy you.—What say you, old Spurious ?” addressing my good aunt, whose indignation had kept her silent.

“ You are a vulgar fellow,” answered she, “ and not worthy of an answer.—

My niece knows there are many illustrious names in the catalogue of living authors; neither is the divine art of poetry so much despised as you seem to imagine."

"Divine!" exclaimed Sir Edward; "show me any divine poetry except the Psalms of Sternhold and Hopkins! Never let me hear that you disgrace your family by writing books of any sort. Women, now-a-days, are so confounded knowing, there's no saying one's soul is one's own! There's my honest friend in Old Broad Street, the laughing-stock of all the city, for running about from house to house to collect friends for his sister's last new play. Didn't he force all his acquaintance to go sweltering into the pit in the month of May? and didn't Mr. Alderman Duroy die of a fever, in consequence of it?—Women have no business either to write or to read, as I said before: the rank I designed my daughter to move in doesn't require either."

"Be assured, Sir," answered I, "your friend in Old Broad Street was zealous to pro-

promote the fame of his sister, through a laudable pride, which taught him to consider her as the most distinguished ornament of a family whose name would be forgotten in another century, were it not immortalized by her literary labours ! and I am only surprized that in these regions of mercenary toil so much genius was ever known to evince itself. With regard to women of talents, Sir, we have some, even of what you call the first rank, who write with feeling and with harmony ; whose names will live when their titles are forgotten !”

“ I don’t believe a word on’t,” replied Sir Edward ; “ and I wouldn’t, for the wealth of the Indies, that Lord Acreland should know of your having written verses—he never would marry you, if he heard of it, I can tell you that.”

“ He never shall marry me, Sir,” answered I ; “ I will perish in obscurity, rather than be his wife.”

Sir Edward now became furious ; his reproaches were cruelly severe, his curses horribly inhuman ! He left me in an
agony

agony of affliction. My poor aunt wept over me. We hastened to Sir Philip and Lady Watkins, who were waiting in the drawing-room. I appealed to them; they were sorrowfully silent. I then flew to my chamber. On the stairs I met Mr. Belmont. "Heavens! Miss Clarendon," said he, "why are you in tears?" I could not answer: he stood wondering at my agitation. When I reached the door of my dressing-room, I turned round and looked at him. He seemed petrified with astonishment; and I heard him exclaim—"Great God! is it possible that such an angel should ever know affliction?" What could he mean, Louisa? His voice seems at this moment to vibrate on my brain. I can think of nothing else. Oh! happy had I been, if fate had destined me to be the wife of such a being!

Why did he gaze on me with such pity, such tenderness, as I passed him? Oh! such a look! I could write for ages, and yet fail to describe it! Then his voice, so earnest, and yet so tremulous;

lous; so fraught with kindness, gentleness, and sorrow! I must forget it; indeed I must, Louisa. Dangerous was its tendency; it threatened something fatal to my repose! Yes—I will—I will forget him! Whom? Charles Belmont? Vain, vain boaster that I am, it is impossible! Why should I? He commiserates my sufferings, and I should detest myself were I capable of ingratitude!

He is not rich! he is a dependant on the bounty of Sir Philip Watkins, an orphan, adopted by him, and placed under the care of a Welch clergyman, who bestowed on him an education which his talents eagerly improved. The labours of classical study have matured such a store of intellectual knowledge as would render him illustrious even in the obscure hovel of the poorest peasant! Oh! Louisa! I have no idea of any distinction equal to that of possessing his friendship!—*friendship!* why do I repeat the word?

Sir Edward has sternly commanded me to set off for Clarendon Abbey to-morrow morning. Sir Philip insists on Mr. Belmont's

mont's being of the party. How I adore Sir Philip! Lord Acreland is to meet us there in a few days. I am almost frantic, when I reflect on the purpose of his visit. Adieu!

SOPHIA CLARENDON.

LETTER IX.

Sir GEORGE FAIRFORD to Lord ACRE-
LAND.

Breconshire.

THE sun had scarcely set when I repaired to the habitation of the melancholy recluse. When I arrived within a quarter of a mile of the ancient castle, I stopped, to contemplate the surrounding landscape. The entrance of the wood, which partly concealed the ruin, lay between two stupendous mountains; from the summit of that on the right hand, a foaming cataract tumbled with a deafening

ing

ing roar, and emptied itself into a rapid river that meandered along the valley. On the left, the ascent was skirted by thick woven trees, whose foliage displayed the decaying season, by the yellow, purple, and crimson hues that variegated the prospect. I entered the wood, and had not proceeded fifty paces before an opening among the trees presented a perfect view of the castle. It was a vast and magnificent ruin! A small cottage reared its roof amidst the half-broken columns and mouldering arches. A wall, and a lofty tower, which had defied the ravages of time, served to prop the lowly habitation.

The deep shades of twilight rendered this secluded spot awfully fascinating! the tower, which was still in perfect repair, was nearly covered with ivy, hanging luxuriantly round the small painted glass windows of the different apartments. I took my solitary seat at the foot of a venerable oak, and began, with my pencil, to trace the most striking objects round me: but I could not long pursue this
pleasing

pleasing melancholy task ; night rapidly approached ; all became indistinct, shadowy, and, by degrees, lost in gloom. I rose, and, with cautious steps, proceeded towards the ruin, listening, and almost fancying myself in the haunts of Druidical superstition.

The moon rose above the summit of the mountain ; its rays darted through the trees : the birds were silent, and the cataract's roar became more distinct, by the universal repose that wrapped every living thing around me. I watched the ruin, but no light appeared from any of the windows. This cannot be the abode of any human being, thought I ; it must be uninhabited.—All was dark, and so perfectly still, that I concluded I had mistaken the road, and was turning back, when heard a female voice distinctly articulate, “ Another day is past, and yet no tranquil hour has marked its progress ! ”

I turned towards the cataract, and beheld what I should have considered as a phantom, had I not been informed that

this dreary spot was the abode of an ill-fated mortal!

She slowly ascended the mountain; the moon shone clearly—and I could just perceive her white drapery waving in the wind. Her figure became more and more faint. I resolved to follow her; she was not fifty yards before me: I quickened my pace—she heard my footsteps, shrieked—and disappeared!

My consternation is not to be described! “Gracious God!” said I—“what has my rashness done? I have destroyed the poor maniac! alarmed by my pursuit, she has precipitated herself into the foaming torrent, and now sleeps amidst its deafening din—for ever!”

I stood like one chained by despair: the idea of what I concluded had happened overwhelmed my senses. “All thy sorrow is vanished,” said I; “all thy wanderings are over! thou wilt behold the sun no more! thy mournful voice will never steal upon the breeze of night again; or thy solitary walk be profaned by unfeeling curiosity.”—The moon retired

tired behind a cloud, and the darkness increased my horrors! I dreaded to move; on every side danger and death seemed to await me. The part of the mountain where I stood was steep and rugged: the wind blew cold, and the mists began to thicken. I felt the turf, it was covered with dew.

My mind reproached me for this selfish attention. "Poor, miserable mortal!" said I; "thou art fearful of the night dew; thou art alarmed at the probability of temporary ill, while the poor maniac's bosom is dashed on the hard rock, or borne along by the wild roaring torrent! Perhaps the dawn will present her a mangled corpse, and the cold glassy lake be her last bed of rest!"

While I was thus agonized by mournful reflections, my eye suddenly beheld a stream of light issuing from the tower. The moon again darted her pale beams over the mountain, and, with the most eager precipitation, I descended to the wood. I approached the ruin: the light was extinguished in the tower; the wind
had

had risen, and the atmosphere was chilling cold.

I resolved to try if I could gain admittance into the cottage; and approaching the threshold, knocked gently at the door. No one answered: I called several times, but all was silent as death. At length, the little casement creaked on its hinges, and a feeble voice inquired what I would have. "I am a traveller," said I: "pray come down, and hear my business."

"Hush!" replied the old woman, "you will awaken my mistress."

My blood was chilled with horror!—Alas! thought I, thy mistress will wake no more! I earnestly entreated the venerable guardian of the cottage to descend: she refused to listen any longer.—"I tell you," said she, "my poor lady is at rest." Again I felt the cold stream thrill through my heart! "For Heaven's sake, come down," answered I: "my impatience will not admit of delay; I have something of importance to communicate

municate—something dreadful, that must be instantly revealed.

“Heaven forbid!” replied the old woman, “we have grief enough already;—If you are a traveller, and have lost your way, you have only to proceed straight forward, for about fifty yards, and then you will find the high road.—Then turn to the left, and the village is not far off. If you are a robber, you have no chance of getting any thing worth your pains here; we are possessed of neither money nor treasure.”

“I would rather bestow, than take from you,” said I. “The business I have, is of so melancholy a nature”——

“I cannot listen to it now,” replied she, “go your ways, my mistress will be very angry if she hears me.”——

“Wretched woman!” said I, “thy mistress, I fear, is beyond the power of resentment!”

“Heaven guard her!” answered the old servant, “she sleeps in the next chamber, and soundly too, or your noise would have waked her.”

“ Whom then did I follow near the foot of the mountain ? What other female inhabits this solitary place ? ” said I, in the most extreme agitation.

“ None,” answered she, “ we live quite alone : no other woman has passed this threshold to-night, I’ll answer for it ; aye, with my life, I would answer for it,” repeated she ; “ so don’t stand here disturbing our rest :—If you have any business with my mistress, come to-morrow, ’twill be time enough then, in all conscience, to hear bad news.” So saying, she shut the casement and retired.

I was lost in astonishment ! “ What have I seen then ? ” said I to myself. “ ’Tis wonderful ! almost incredible ! ” Certain I am, it was a female form,—I saw it distinctly,—it vanished ! There is no other habitation of any kind in this wood ; I do not believe in superstitious tales, and yet I cannot account for this extraordinary deception.

My eyes were fixed upon the cottage windows, and I perceived transient flashes, which convinced me that some one was striking

striking a light. In a moment the chamber was illumined, and I heard the old servant conversing with some person, whose voice was soft and gentle. The light increased, and the smoke ascended from the chimney; the moon continued to shine clearly, and I had a perfect view of the surrounding objects. Nearly opposite the window stood a part of the ruin, its distance not ten paces from the cottage; I resolved to climb this favourable spot, and thereby, if possible, command a view of the chamber. Again the casement was opened; I retired behind the ruin; again it was closed, and I re-commenced my task, carefully avoiding to make the least noise that might give alarm.

In a few moments I was so situated, as to obtain a perfect view of the apartment. But judge of my astonishment when I beheld a chamber tastefully decorated! A small bed was overhung with a canopy of chintz, fastened to the ceiling, and festooned on each side with peculiar elegance. The walls were painted of a pale greyish colour, and adorned with drawings: on

one side, stood a bookcase, and in the opposite corner, a harp. The chimney was dressed with flowers, a wood fire blazed, conveniently, for by its light I could make the most minute observations: so far I have been correct in my description, but how shall I portray the mistress of the dwelling?

She lay, reclining her cheek upon her hand, her elbow resting on her pillow. Her countenance was pale, but exquisitely beautiful! Her head was bound with a white handkerchief; she wore a sleeping dress, fastened at the breast with a black ribband; and seemed to be in earnest conversation with an old and wrinkled woman, who knelt beside her, holding a candle, the light of which fell exactly on the most lovely and interesting form I ever remember to have seen! "Is this a maniac?" said I. "Impossible! Thou hast more of sorrow than of frenzy;—hapless sufferer! I could cherish thee in my bosom; I could love thee, even if thou wert deprived of reason; I could not let thee wander over the earth to seek a resting

ing place ; and, at last, to close thy melancholy days in obscurity !

“ Why did you employ me in a research that has produced such a world of sympathy ! Why did fate direct my footsteps to the dwelling of this enchanting woman ? If this be the forsaken Angelina, I shall condemn you unheard ;—to have known such a being ; to have loved her ; and then to have deserted her !—I cannot believe you capable of such madness !”

I remained at my post for more than half an hour ;—the old servant then retired to the adjoining chamber, she took the light with her, the fire was nearly extinguished, and I returned to the village : the whole night was past in meditation ; and I determined on the following day to see, and to converse with the enchanting object, whose fate awakened the tenderest interest—the most mournful sympathy !

I cannot describe my sensations, while I encourage the hope that I have discovered Mrs. Sydenham's retreat ; I tremble to be convinced ;—painful will be her fate, if she ever loved you !—Acute will

be your misery, if you have betrayed her confidence ! I will not believe it possible ; endeavour to think, with me, that there are two such beings, formed to adorn the world, yet destined to a life of sorrowful seclusion. I would not endure the self-corroding shaft of conscious guilt towards such an object, for all the splendour that can dazzle the eyes of fools, or all the wealth that can purchase the adulation of the base. Farewel,

My dear Lord,

Your's faithfully,

GEORGE FAIRFORD.

LETTER X.

CHARLES BELMONT *to the Rev. Mr. Jones.*

Clarendon Abbey.

SIR Philip's kindness knows no bounds, he is, at once, my father, my guardian, and my friend ! He still calls me his adopted son, and by every unremitting attention

attention makes me honour him as a parent.

Last night we arrived at Clarendon Abbey. Sir Philip and Lady Watkins occupied their own chaise. Miss Clarendon, Sir Edward, and myself, came in the family landau. It was my lot to sit opposite to the amiable Sophia. I observed her countenance with minute attention, it was placid, but so melancholy, that my heart throbbed with pity;—the tenderest sympathy kept us both silent, till we were interrupted by Sir Edward.

“Sophy,” said he, “you will be another sort of person when you next travel on this road with an Earl’s coronet on your carriage: every thing will then be quite in a new style; for though I pay as much as a Lord, people don’t feel the same respect for my character.”

“Merit, Sir,” replied Miss Clarendon, “ought to be the only passport to respect, Heaven knows, I look to the mind only, and can despise the nonsensical distinctions of fortune.” As she pronounced these words, her voice assumed an unusual

tone of animation : she looked earnestly at me, her eyes seemed to penetrate my soul. I felt my face redden like a woman's. She perceived, that I acknowledged the force of her manner, though I had not the vanity to confess the application of the sentiment. She smiled for the first time during the two hours that we had been in the carriage.

“ Aye, aye ! 'tis all very fine talking ;” said Sir Edward, “ but there is no real or substantial happiness without rank ; people of fashion may do any thing with impunity.”

“ And they too often avail themselves of their privilege !” replied Miss Clarendon. “ I am certain there is more sentiment and honour to be found in a mountain hovel, than the nicest discrimination could discover in some of the mansions of our nobility.” Again she looked expressively at me : I felt most uncomfortably, and would have given any thing I possess to have been out of the carriage. My manner must have appeared ridiculously awkward : I knew not what to say ; yet I honestly
confess,

confess, that had no eye but her's witnessed my gratitude, I should have fallen at her feet and worshipped her as an idol! Is there in the zeal of a bigot, any sensation like that which she inspires?

Miss Clarendon frequently complained of a pain in her head during the morning; and, more than once, hinted a wish to rest for an hour or two, the motion of the carriage being almost insupportable. Her eyes were languid, and her cheeks seemed flushed with fever; she complained of thirst, and giddiness: we stopped at Maidenhead-bridge, to change horses; Miss Clarendon again ventured to speak of her indisposition, and expressed a desire to remain quiet even for half an hour. "No, no," answered Sir Edward, "I can't think on't; dinner is ordered at Henley, at five o'clock; 'tis now four, every thing will be overdone, if we mind your whims; exercise is the best remedy for the head-ache; you are beginning to have the capricious humours of a fine lady already—'tis time enough to have megrims when you are Countess of Acreland." The landau pro-

ceeded—Miss Clarendon sighed ! and my heart throbbed with indignation.

It was near dark when we arrived at the abbey. As soon as the carriage stopped, Sir Edward descended. “ You will hand out Sophy, Mr. Belmont,” said he ; she followed : as we entered the portico she looked towards me, and exclaimed, “ Heavens ! what a day have I passed !” Sir Philip and Lady Watkins now joined us, and the conversation turned upon different topics. Miss Clarendon retired to rest, and nothing worthy of notice occurred during the remainder of the evening.

I could not close my eyes the whole night ; Miss Clarendon’s countenance, her voice, her manner, and the severity of her father, filled my mind with tormenting reflections. Why is such a woman ordained to be wretched ? There was a meaning in her addressing me ;—certainly there was : her eyes are too intelligent to be mistaken ; they beamed with regret, with reason, with an expression that declared she is not happy. She awakened my feelings, demanded my sympathy ;—

this

this is not vanity; perhaps so persecuted, she would have made the same appeal to any other person; I will endeavour to think so; at least, I will endeavour.

Lady Watkins lately asked my opinion of her niece: I could not reply to such a question. Had she inquired how I liked a picture or a statue, I might have satisfied her curiosity: but there is no word which can convey my opinion of Sophia Clarendon. Gracious God! what a cold inanimate mortal must that be, who could find language to describe such perfection!

I think my temper is much altered, since I left the mountains; I am grown impatient, sometimes impetuous. Is it the intercourse with society that changes my nature? It must be so; for I cannot attribute it to any other cause: at least I will not venture to question my heart upon the subject. Miss Clarendon is mild and gentle, though oppressed by all that can pierce the bosom of sensibility:—and yet she is no philosopher! I dare not make a comparison, I should despise my own weakness.

This morning when I entered the library before breakfast, I found Miss Clarendon drawing; she appeared to be much confused at my interrupting her, and cautiously hid the sketch she had made, beneath the paper on which she commenced another subject. "Pray suffer me to see your study," said I, "every new proof of your talents excites my admiration." She smiled—

"You shall endeavour to draw my profile," said she.

"Indeed," replied I, "the task is beyond my power." I took the pencil, and she seated herself near the table; "but why a profile?" said I, "the expression of your eyes will be lost."

"I am certain a profile will be most like me," answered Miss Clarendon; "I never can gaze steadily at any one object; neither would you make the eyes resemble mine, because I cannot look at you, as I do at other people."

"Let us read then," said I, taking down a volume of Werter.

"I can—

“ I cannot, indeed Mr. Belmont,” replied Miss Clarendon, “ I cannot hear you read that story. I will leave you to your meditations, they are of too melancholy a complexion for my feelings.”— I ran and placed myself between her and the door: she laughed, and endeavoured to pass.—“ Don’t make me a prisoner, Mr. Belmont,” said she; “ I shall not enjoy my freedom many days!” The idea struck me like lightning—I bowed as she left the library, and stood wrapt in thought, near the door, till Sir Edward awakened me, by a summons to walk with him about the grounds.—I have only time to finish my letter abruptly.

You will tell me, that I am a fool, a vain opiniated idiot; that I suffer my reason to be hoodwinked by idle and improbable ideas;—you will say that my recent acquaintance with the world is the cause of my childish suppositions;—I acknowledge your reproof; I yield to your better judgment. But, my dear Sir, can you, with all your wisdom, tell me, why Sophia Clarendon cannot look at me, as she

does at other people? Oh Heavens! there is more joy comprised in that acknowledgment, than volumes of rhetoric could explain! Where is the sophistry that can talk me out of that conviction? Books may expand the mind; philosophy arm it against the ills of life; but Sophia Clarendon inspires the heart with something that approaches to divinity! I certainly am a new creature since I have been the companion of her studies: and I feel but too conscious, that all my future days will be devoted to the memory of her virtues! Farewell, my friend, my earliest monitor; rest assured, that whatever my heart may encounter, I never will dishonour the name of

CHARLES BELMONT.

LETTER

LETTER XI.

SOPHIA CLARENDON to Mrs. HORTON.

Clarendon Abbey.

I HAVE waited anxiously for your letter; nothing can equal my uneasiness on account of your health, or my solicitude for further information respecting Lord Acreland.

We arrived at the abbey last night; in a few days—how shall I write it—in a few short days, I shall be sacrificed to misery—to ambition! Alas! there is no remedy, my soul is subdued and rendered too feeble for resistance!

This amiable stranger! He, too, will witness the dreadful ceremony! Oh, God! happy had I been, if either Charles Belmont, or Lord Acreland, had never existed; the contrast between their characters perplexes me beyond all bearing.—I certainly was born to be the sport of fortune.

My wedding paraphernalia is completed; the most superb brilliants are destined

tined to cover a bosom, which conceals an heart torn with contending agonies; I detest, I abhor Lord Acreland; he is expected here daily, and when he arrives my doom will be decided for ever.

Could you behold Charles Belmont, could you but hear his voice, you would not wonder at my esteeming him. Every thing he says has consolation in it;—he has worth to command the adulation of the world;—he has virtue enough to despise it! Never will I believe that the mind acquires expansion by an intercourse with different nations; Mr. Belmont has been educated in solitude; he has never mingled with the breathing multitudes of earth; he has had no acquaintance with the exalted, or the proud; and yet he is perfect!

My father's severity increases every hour; I cannot comprehend his meaning. I have never offended him, even from my infancy;—my good aunt, Juliana, has been, in fact, my only parent; she is wholly averse to my intended marriage; what if I were to leave the abbey, and fly
to

to her for protection ? I think she would receive me ; I know she would commiserate my sufferings. Oh ! if Charles Belmont had but an atom of affection in his heart, and resolution to declare it, I would not hesitate to risk my father's displeasure, and be his, beyond the power of fate to part us !

How I despise those petty distinctions which derive their origin from chance or fortune ; how my heart shudders when I behold a wretch, debased in mind, and warped by prejudice, frowning the sons of genius into submission, and silencing the claims of modest merit, by the overbearing taunts of purchased adulation. Why is Charles Belmont considered as the inferior of Lord Acreland ? Is it because the one has a soul replete with all that can ennoble, all that can refine ! and the other, a title, to which he was born, and which the practice of every vice cannot wrest from him ? O ! miserable pre-eminence ! profanation of all the graces that nature can bestow, or reason discriminate.

I am

I am vanquished by the grief I have encountered; you remember what I was, only a few months since; the veriest mad-cap that ever broke the barriers of a nursery. The vivacity of my temper, was considerably augmented by a foreign education; the years I passed in France and Italy animated my mind, and I was looked upon in all societies as one of the liveliest English girls that ever had been seen on the continent. How I am changed, no language can describe; I feel it, and I also feel that it is a change which will terminate my existence.

The culprit, whose hour of annihilation approaches, dreads it not so much, as I do the arrival of Lord Acreland; I have a strong pre-sentiment that his visit will be productive of something fatal.—Are we not authorised to avert, if possible, impending calamities? What is instinct in brutes, is reflection in us: is not sympathy a sort of supernatural power? and why do I shed tears when I think of the unfortunate Belmont? When I behold him, with all his perfections, an orphan—

a de-

a dependant ! If sympathy is supernatural, it is the gift of some divine agent, who sanctifies the impulse ; Heaven will not surely punish the sentiment it inspires.

Thus do I endeavour to reconcile my mind to its partiality for one, whose virtues claim the most unequivocal admiration ! Is it not cruel, that I am obliged to disguise the noblest sensation that my heart can experience ? Since I am reduced to so dreadful an act of duplicity, I will not add to the crime, by professing to love an object I despise ; at least, in that instance, I will avow my sentiments. Then let Lord Acreland reflect at leisure.

Write to me, and tell me that you applaud my candour ; tell me, that such a resolution is worthy of your friend,

SOPHIA CLARENDON.

LETTER

LETTER XII.

CHARLES BELMONT *to the Rev. Mr. Jones.*

Clarendon Abbey.

I WAS engaged all this morning in attending Sir Edward Clarendon, and in examining the beauties of this enchanting spot, where nature has been so liberal, that she almost defies art to lend it a single attraction.

The house which is built in the Gothic stile of architecture, though Sir Edward has added a Corinthian portico, stands at the extremity of a beautiful lawn, which gradually slopes to an extensive sheet of water. The park is bordered by hanging woods on one side, and on the other, lays open to a vast extent of country, terminated by the hills of Gloucestershire. The intermediate level presents the most luxuriant diversity of woods, rivers, and pasturage; in short, description cannot do justice to scenes so rich, so variegated, so sublime!

Amidst

Amidst the woody ascent on the east side of Clarendon Park, on a projecting part of the eminence, stands a small hermitage, built with the trunks of trees, and entirely covered with interwoven woodbine, ivy, vine, and myrtle; the threshold is overspread with moss; the windows are of exquisitely painted glass, and a shallow limpid rivulet winds near its foundation, till it loses itself in the gloom that surrounds it. The interior of this retreat, which is half a mile from the abbey, is simply decorated. The clay floor is covered with matting; the chairs are formed of rude branches of oak, a couch, with a woven straw mattress and pillow, represents the hermit's bed of repose; this completes the first apartment. The second, is still less in its dimensions, but more amply adorned, for it is well stored with books. I never beheld so fascinating a retreat! I could forswear the world, and become a perfect anchorite, to pass the remainder of my days in this delightful solitude.

Sir Edward contemned my taste with great vehemence. "I don't like this hermitage;"

mitage;" said he, "'tis a dark dismal hole, and only fit to make a man hang or drown himself;—I have some thoughts of pulling it down, and building a Chinese pagoda in its stead." He assured me it was no fancy of his—but "a whim wham, as one may say, of the late owner of Clarendon Abbey. I only let it remain so long," continued Sir Edward, "to please Sophy, but now she is going to leave it, people shall see my taste, and then let 'em judge of the difference; besides, a pagoda will be of some use, one can breed pigeons;—and I like that sort of building—it looks so lively with the gilt bells and things, painted in different colours. This old musty dog-hole spoils the wood entirely.—For my part, I hate to put my foot within side the threshold—it makes one hipp'd all the day afterwards. I had some thoughts of turning it into a smoking room, but 'tis too far from the abbey for that. In short, 'tis only fit to make a bonfire, and to that use shall it be put the first opportunity." So ended his judicious harangue—and such are the ideas of a
mind,

mind, divested of all the graces of fancy, or education.

Miss Clarendon is the most enlightened of women ! I have witnessed such proofs of her sensibility, that I no longer hesitate to declare, she is in my opinion, unequalled ! There is a something in her look, so replete with sentiment, something so placid, so pensive, so formed for retirement, that I fear she will not be happy in her new alliance. Nothing can be more lovely !—but her beauty is less brilliant, than it is interesting. Her countenance, which is dark, has more of melancholy than animation ; she is not tall, but the symmetry of her form is exquisite ! she is entirely unaffected—yet perfectly well-bred ; the ingenuousness of her temper sometimes conveys the idea of simplicity, though every word she utters is the oracle of reason ! She sings with impressive harmony, and plays on several instruments with captivating skill.

You will, perhaps, wonder at my precision, but could you witness the splendour
of

of her acquirements, as I do, your surprise would cease.

Sir Edward has commanded that all attention to business shall subside till after the marriage is solemnized. Autumn being far advanced, I shall, probably, return to London in about a month or six weeks. I shall regret leaving the abbey, for, after my native mountains, this is the spot in the universe the most favoured by nature ! I am summoned to dinner,—in the evening I will resume my pen.

We dined in the temple, near the aviary ; an ice house beneath the marble floor, contributed to the pleasure of our repast, by rendering the situation cool and refreshing. Miss Clarendon was indisposed, and therefore requested to be excused from dining with us. She promised to partake of the dessert, and she did not disappoint our hopes. When she appeared, her beautiful dark eyes too evidently betrayed the cause of her absence ; they were still humid with tears, and the more than usual paleness of her cheek was remarked by every person at the table.

Lady

Lady Watkins observed her countenance with the most earnest attention—she looked at Sir Philip, then at me, and by a significant movement of her head, expressed every thing that pity could inspire, or sensibility experience.

“Come, come, Sophy,” said Sir Edward, “cheer up my good girl, these are only little prudish airs that all young ladies know how to assume; we have had enough of them. I expect my Lord this evening, and what will he say to find you whimpering and looking so woebegone? Why you see, child, Mr. Belmont is astonished at your conduct, and doesn’t know what to make on’t. Fie, fie upon you, I am quite ashamed of your behaviour.”

Miss Clarendon was silent; but she exactly resembled Patience, so exquisitely described by our immortal Shakspeare! She smiled! but it was the smile of unrepining submission. I could have clasped her to my heart with the purest zeal; and have sworn to perish in defending her happiness, or in chastising the wretch who had occasioned her inquietude.

“What are you sulky about?” continued Sir Edward; “I believe there are few young women, who, on the point of being made a Countess, would look so discontented. I shou’dn’t be surpris’d, if you continue in this humour, to see you snivelling and blubbering before my Lord.”

“Brother,” said Lady Watkins, “you oppress the dear child by your coarse remarks; we cannot at all times command good spirits; your daughter is indisposed, and your taunting manner will only increase, what it cannot possibly cure. Come, my love,” continued she, “taking Miss Clarendon by the hand—when you have drank your coffee we will stroll about the grounds: the air will revive you; I am really distressed at your dejection; Charles, you shall be our protector, for I shall want the aid of your arm.”—I bowed assent. Miss Clarendon rose from her seat, her eyes still fixed on the ground, and her cheek as pale as a corpse.

“Why not all go together?” said Sir Edward.

“No,

“No, indeed,” answered Lady Watkins, “you must not be of our party; your boisterous conversation will only interrupt our tranquillity. Come, Charles,” continued this amiable woman, taking hold of my arm, “if I am stout enough we will walk to the hermitage.” We left Sir Edward and my good father, for so I continue to call Sir Philip, to finish their claret, and for some minutes strolled slowly along without uttering a syllable.

We were roused from our silence by a deep sigh that seemed to rend the bosom of Miss Clarendon. “Indeed, my Sophia,” said Lady Watkins, “I shall scold you myself if you indulge this melancholy. You are not conscious of the pain I experience, when you are afflicted;—and here is poor Charles, looking as sorrowful as you do; how can you suffer every body to be miserable on your account?” Again a profound silence ensued, nor was it broken till we reached the hermitage.

The evening was glowing and sultry; I opened the windows, the faint breezes fanning the woodbine that hung round them,

them, conveyed its perfume through the apartment. Lady Watkins seated herself on the straw couch; Miss Clarendon and myself stood near the window.

“How many happy days have I passed at this dear abbey!” said she; “How many hours have I wandered among these woods, with a bosom free from inquietude!” Again the deep sigh and the involuntary tear marked the perturbation of her mind:—I knew not how to reply.

“This hermitage;” continued she, “is my favourite retreat; I never enter beneath its roof without experiencing a tranquil pleasure which language cannot describe.”

“Let its enchanting quiet harmonize your mind;” said I. She started.

“Why? does my manner betray any thing like discord, Mr. Belmont?” answered she; “the string you have touched, is a delicate one;—beware how you play upon it:—its tone is penetrating, though it has little power to resist the hand of affliction!” A forced smile, and an arch expression, accompanied her words. “Nay, don’t

don't look so solemn," continued she, "I should be sorry to infect your mind with melancholy—though you are determined to persuade me that I am not happy."

"Pardon me, Miss Clarendon," said I, "for the impertinence of supposing that your enlightened mind can for a moment, be unharmonious: the abode of innocence cannot be otherwise than tranquil; I believe you are every thing you wish to be."

"How provoking you are;" answered Miss Clarendon; "indeed, indeed, you are too sarcastic.—Do you really think that I am what I wish to be?"

"Certainly;" replied I, "from the conviction, that you may be any thing you please. There is nothing mortal, which worth like your's cannot command."

"Then why do you suppose, I am not happy!"—

"Because," answered I, "there is a busy, barbarous fiend, called sensibility."—

"Again I conjure you not to strike that chord;" said Miss Clarendon, "it will not bear vibration. The plant that

shrinks from the touch of mortals, revives again; but sensibility cannot endure the pressure of the rude hand of sorrow!"

"Of sorrow!" exclaimed I, "Gracious God! gifted as you are, amiable, unoffending, mild, compassionate! lives there a being capable of inflicting a pang on such a bosom?"

"How can you ask so absurd a question?" said Miss Clarendon. "You know that such a being *does* exist."

"Name him," answered I. "I should like to punish such a monster. Give me but your authority, and——"

"Hold, I conjure you," said she; "I do not accuse any one; indeed I do not. Your impressive manner has quite alarmed me.—I do not complain, although Lord Acreland——"

"Is it Lord Acreland, Madam," said I, "who has the happiness to excite this tender agitation? Since you are so very eager to insure his safety, Heaven forbid that I should seek to endanger it—even for a moment. I was mistaken; you must forgive my zeal. I thought you had

had cause for complaint—but I find myself deceived.”

“ How can you hold such language ?” answered Miss Clarendon ; “ ungenerous as you are, I will not reproach you : in a few days I shall be the wife of Lord Acreland, you will then perceive whether or not I am happy. But remember, Charles, though I can detest Lord Acreland, I can value my own honour ! and when I have once had the courage to be wretched, I shall also have strength of mind to avoid temptation.”

We were now interrupted by Lady Watkins, who desired me to gather her some grapes, which hung over the door of the hermitage. I obeyed her commands, not forgetting to select the most delicious offering for my angelic monitress, who assisted me in my task. She thanked me with such sweet impressive grace, that I would have made a pilgrimage to Mecca for such another simile !

“ You are very kind,” said she : “ I feel my spirits more composed.”

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed I: "may they never again be ruffled by worldly sorrow, or officious impertinence."

A reproachful glance again silenced me. "What am I to conclude from such extraordinary severity?" said Miss Clarendon: "you know how to soothe affliction, but you know also how to remind the sufferer of the obligation. Oh! Mr. Belmont! believe me there is less merit in remedying those evils that we ourselves occasion, than in relieving distress which springs from other sources. The former is but an act of justice, the latter has the seal of humanity, which renders the deed immortal. Let your heart be honest, before it is ostentatious. When you are self-acquitted, take upon you the task of reproof; it will then become you."

"Self-acquitted! Gracious God!" said I; "have I ever sinned against you, Miss Clarendon? Have I ever been so unfortunate as to cause you a moment's uneasiness? If I am so cursed, tell me, at least, the nature of my crime, and I will expiate it by a life of penitence."

"Why

“ Why do you dislike Lord Acreland ?” said she.

“ Because I cannot pay court to the empty sound of a title, where I find so little virtue to give it consequence.”

“ Have you no *other* reason ?” said Miss Clarendon, with a serious and solemn tone.

I understood her meaning : I could have answered—“ Yes, Lord Acreland is to be the husband of the loveliest of women !” but I preferred her happiness to my own, and remained silent. Had I been rich, had I been only independent, I do not think I should have evinced such forbearance.

“ Come,” said Lady Watkins, “ let us return to the abbey ; Sir Philip and my brother will be impatient for our company : it grows late ; the dew rises fast, and I shall be a tedious while getting back.”

“ Let us stay only five minutes,” answered Miss Clarendon ; “ happiness is not long-lived in this world of vexation ;

and why should we endeavour to render it still more transient?"

"Nay, my love," said Lady Watkins, "if you are happy here, I will not hurry you away; but the abbey is more suited to the time of the evening, and you may be as happy there, if you wish it; the society will be the same."

"Not exactly," answered Sophia: "but I am ready to attend you."

We quitted the hermitage, and hastened through the wood.

"How different is this solitary scene from those I shall shortly be condemned to witness!" continued Miss Clarendon.

"Why say *condemned* to witness?" replied Lady Watkins. "All the prospects before you are gay, magnificent, attractive, and replete with splendour!"

"I detest every thing that is splendid," said Miss Clarendon.

"Is it possible that one so formed by nature to adorn a court can detest the idea of magnificence?" answered I. "Can you seriously think as you speak, Miss Cla-

Clarendon? You will soon change your opinion, when the pomp of rank and the adulation or crowds shall follow your footsteps."

"How little do you know me!" said she; "I would rather live in a mountain hut, with an amiable object, than be the most admired ornament of any court in Europe."

"When you are the wife of Lord Acreland," said Lady Watkins, smiling, "you will forget these romantic flights."

"When I am the wife of Lord Acreland," answered Miss Clarendon, gravely, "I shall be capable of forgetting every generous, noble, and disinterested sentiment. Thank Heaven, that period is yet far distant."

An unusual degree of joy agitated my heart when she pronounced these words, for they were accompanied with a look more than significant! I dare not describe it—it can only be felt!

The landscape was now beautifully serene; every object was tinged with a crimson hue, reflected from the clouds that

rolled round the retiring fun: the abbey windows caught their blaze, and were brilliantly illumined. I looked frequently back, and could scarcely discern the favourite hermitage: all that had occurred there, now rushed across my brain. I ought—oh! my friend, I ought to forget it: such moments of delight pass like the lightning's flash, leaving the scene around more dark and more terrific!

When we reached the temple, we found the deffert still upon the table, but the Knight and Sir Philip had returned to the abbey. "This place is too cold for me," said Lady Watkins.

"I will drink a glass of iced water and follow you," answered Miss Clarendon; "I feel myself faint and overwhelmed.—Mr. Belmont, I beg you to take care of my good aunt: I shall overtake you in an instant." She ascended the marble steps feebly—I followed her involuntarily.

"Go, go," said she; "Lady Watkins is fatigued with her long walk; she will want the support of your arm."

"Let

“ Let me assist you,” answered I, taking the decanter from her ; my hand undesignedly pressed her’s : I could not articulate another word. The sensation was undescribable !—I offered her the glass of water ; she took it, and with downcast eyes put it to her lips. The sudden paleness of her cheek, the tremulous motion of her hand, increased my embarrassment—she sighed—I thought tenderly !—Oh ! such a moment would recompense me for whole years of agony !

From the temple, which was supported by pillars of white marble, we commanded a perfect view of the park lodge ; and while we were absorbed in this delicious reverie, a courier entered the gate—a post-chaise and four immediately followed. “ ’Tis Lord Acreland !” exclaimed Miss Clarendon, and instantly fainted.

I caught her in my arms ; judge of my situation : alone, with such a being—at the calm hour of twilight—she, beautiful as an angel !—insensible ! I ! O God ! how shall I describe my feelings ?

I knelt,

I knelt, and supported her; her arm hung over my shoulder; her cheek touched mine: it was cold—she scarcely breathed. I beheld her with tenderness so pure, that I would not have profaned that cheek for all that the universe could offer!

While I was thus perplexed, agitated, overwhelmed, Sir Edward entered the temple! 'Tis not in the power of language to delineate his countenance. I attempted to explain the cause of our awkward situation; my voice faltered.

“Spare yourself the trouble of adding the crime of falsehood to the baseness of ingratitude,” said he; “my daughter’s infamy cannot be concealed: meet your patron, Sir Philip, and myself, in half an hour; you will find us in the library.—As for this wretched girl,” continued Sir Edward, “I command you instantly to leave her: I will send my sister to her; she shall at least know the authority of a father; and be assured, Sir, you shall have your reward also.”

“Sir

“ Sir Edward,” answered I, “ this cruelty surpasses comprehension ! I will meet your worst reproaches : but I will not leave this angel in her present state ; this pure, this persecuted angel !”

“ As to her purity,” replied Sir Edward, “ I believe her punishment will be equal to her crime ; I am the best judge how far she is persecuted. Come, Sir, no more excuses : I had rather see her dead, than in this situation, disgraced, dishonoured !”

“ I can despise such slander,” said I ; “ and since you have insulted me by so gross an insinuation, I will also disdain your threats.”—He now approached me with the fury of a fiend. She still lay senseless on my arm : the gloom prevented my seeing her features distinctly. I trembled with rage and horror ; I touched her cheek, it was still as cold as marble. Distraction almost triumphed over my faculties. I placed my hand upon her side ; her heart palpitated, and a gleam of consolation again rescued me from frenzy.—Sir Edward now lost every sense of human
man

man kindness; every shadow of decorum. "Quit her this instant," said he; "or I will drag her from your hold, ungrateful villain!"

Roused by the epithet, I forgot my precious charge, and suddenly rose: she fell upon the marble pavement with violence. I instantly recollected what I had done: my distraction was complete. I gently raised her. Her white forehead was stained with blood: I could just perceive it by the faint light. Reason now forsook me. — "Oh! barbarous monster!" said I, "you have destroyed her! I trust your vengeance is appeased: if you will not call assistance, by Heavens I will alarm the family. I will not be accessory to this unnatural murder!"

My frenzy alarmed him; he left the temple, uttering curses on his child. The effusion of blood recalled the sufferer to life. "Where am I?" said she,

I pressed her to my heart. "Thank God! thank God!" was all that I could utter. "Oh! Mr. Belmont!" said she. "Fear

“Fear nothing, you are safe,” answered I; “let me assist you to rise: you have hurt yourself in falling; do not be alarmed, I will perish in the defence of your honour, or your peace of mind, they are both sacred.”

I raised her from the ground; she had not strength to support herself. I led her to a chair near the steps of the temple, and instantly flew towards the abbey.—Sir Philip and Lady Watkins met me.—“Charles,” said the latter, “what is this I have heard? Where is Miss Clarendon?”—“By all that is sacred, I am incapable of a dishonourable action,” answered I. “There is no necessity for a defence, where there is no crime.”

We returned to Miss Clarendon; by this time the servants were hastening towards us with lights. Lord Acreland followed them. When they came to the temple, the scene was horrible: the poor sufferer was leaning against the marble pillar, which was stained with the blood flowing from her forehead. Her face was the emblem of death; her lips were colourless,

lourless, her eyes languid, her speech inarticulate.

“ She will die !” exclaimed Lady Watkins. “ Oh Charles ! what have you done ?”

“ What has Sir Edward done ?” answered I, “ He only was the cause of this disaster—and Heaven will curse him for it. If she expires, by all that is sacred he shall not survive her.”

“ You are hasty, young man,” said Lord Acreland. “ You have lost your reason, and want advice to regain it.”

“ I have not lost my honour, Lord Acreland,” answered I, “ and will defend it ; therefore keep your counsel for a more convenient moment ;—while Miss Clarendon is in danger, I am always to be found.”

Lady Watkins and a female servant bound their handkerchiefs round Miss Clarendon’s forehead, and with some difficulty we conveyed her to the abbey.—She immediately retired to her chamber, and I hastened to the library to meet her father.

In the hall I met Sir Philip, he insisted on being present. "My old friend and kinsman," said he, "will not be so wrong-headed as to resent a misfortune that attached no blame to you. I know you, my boy; and, old as I am, will punish any man who shall dare suspect you of a dishonourable action. I will settle this business properly,—you must forget and forgive on both sides." He led me out of the hall—we stood upon the steps of the portico.

"I may forgive the injurious suspicions of a father, jealous of a daughter's honour," said I, "but how shall I forget the name of—villain?"

"Charles," answered Sir Philip; "you know that I have always loved you as a son. My wife has not been sparing of affection; Sir Edward is her brother. He is the parent of Miss Clarendon; his manners are uncouth, his temper ferocious, his mind overbearing. Consider all these circumstances; reflect on the grief any rash act on your part would occasion to the

the whole family. Think only for a moment what Sophia would suffer."

"Sophia!" exclaimed I. "Oh! Sir Philip; you will make me infamous: you will take from me all that sense of honour which distinguishes the worthy from the base; I entreat you not to name Sophia."

"Her fate," continued Sir Philip, "would be terrible!—Should her father fall, she will consider herself as the occasion of his death; her abhorrence of you would be augmented by the remembrance of your attachment to my family; Lady Watkins would expire with grief, to think that she had cherished in her bosom the murderer of her brother."

"How shall I heal the wound my honour has received, Sir Philip?"

"Be patient till to-morrow;" answered this worthiest of mortals; "only avoid Sir Edward to-night—I will make him sensible of his improper conduct before he sleeps. Charles, you cannot refuse your old friend this small request—he never denied you any thing."

"I will

“ I will obey you, Sir Philip—but remember, that the moment I cease to be the character which you have esteemed—I shall not value my existence.”

“ Not a word more, I conjure you, my dear Charles,” said Sir Philip. Lady Watkins’s voice interrupted the conversation. They returned to the library, and I retired to my chamber, where I conclude this letter.

I have endeavoured to give you a correct account of this day’s misfortunes. When I began the long and mournful detail, how different were my sensations from those which I now experience ! But life is a labyrinth, where every rose conceals a thorn to wound the wretched traveller. I hear voices in Miss Clarendon’s chamber, only a thin partition divides it from mine.—Perhaps she is worse.—I go to inquire.

Sophia is composed and easy;—her maid informed me that she was inclined to sleep.—O God ! when shall I sleep again ?

CHARLES BELMONT.

LET-

LETTER XIII.

*Lord ACRELAND to Sir GEORGE FAIR-
FORD.*

Clarendon Abbey.

I SHOULD have answered your letter sooner, but it arrived in Cavendish Square after I had left town, and was forwarded to me at Clarendon Abbey.

You have suffered your credulity to be imposed upon; the adventure you so pathetically describe would make some impression in the pages of romance; but I am a man of the world, and my mode of reasoning is not easily bewildered in the mazes of poetical fancy.

The person after whom I requested you to make inquiries, cannot possibly be the female whom you describe as the "Lady of the Mountains." Mrs. Sydenham had too much understanding to sacrifice her time in so sentimental a seclusion; she must have been too sensible of her perfections, to let them remain in such total obscurity.

scurity. Be assured, that vanity is a predominant feature in the character of woman; and though many of the sex are gifted with the most exquisite sensibility, neglect always awakens that pride, which enables them to resist despondency.

I could not help smiling at the melancholy description you gave of the moonlight adventure; why, my worthy friend, thou art a perfect Quixote! ready to encounter all the dangers, and all the wonders, of mountains, cataracts, midnight glooms, spectres, haunted castles, and forests, whose impervious shades are the supposed resort of Genii, only begotten in the infected brain of a romantic knight-errant. Trust me, Sir George, the amiable woman I wish to find, would more probably be the inmate of a decent farm-house, and the associate of simple honest souls, than the inhabitant of the dreary abode which you have so poetically described! Previous to my setting out from London I imparted the task I requested you to perform to my sister; who assured me, that the amiable, the unfortunate Angelina, was,

was, long since, released from a world of sorrow ; but as I do not exactly give credit to all that Lady Selina reports, I have still some doubts respecting her information. Yet, as for the last four years, no application has been made to my agent, for the payment of Mrs. Sydenham's settlement, I think a farther search will be useless; follow your own fancy, however; and if any discovery takes place, give me the earliest information.

My marriage with Miss Clarendon will be celebrated as soon as she is recovered from an unlucky accident which has befallen her. After the ceremony I shall convey her into Suffex. The sea breezes will prove beneficial to her health, which has, for some time, been evidently declining. Sir Edward's conduct respecting his daughter's fortune has been handsome in the extreme—seventy thousand, down; and Clarendon Abbey at his death! No bad bargain, Sir George. Indeed, the city is the only place to patch up a shattered credit; the coffers of gold, snugly heaped together on the east side of Saint Paul's, are
excellent

excellent props for a trembling fabric of fashionable dissipation; and a wife, educated in the sober tenets of mercantile calculation, is a more rational companion than a Lady Charlotte, or Lady Jane, whose days have been an unvarying scene of splendid embarrassment; and whose nights have been sacrificed to rapacious associates; where, plunged in the vortex of a gaming table, health, fame, and fortune, after a painful struggle, sink in the abyss of inevitable destruction! You will laugh at my moralizing; but, in fact, after all that we can say in defence of ourselves, the poorest peasant enjoys more happiness in that sweet rest which follows labour, than the most luxurious son of indolence can boast on the couch of useless magnificence.

Miss Clarendon is really a very charming girl! The smoky regions, in which she has lately been condemned to pass her hours, have not dimmed the lustre of her talents; and I shall not blush to present her, with all her native graces, to that circle, where admiration will confirm my

choice, and the envy of her own sex proclaim the superiority of her attractions!

I have been at Clarendon Abbey these two days; and, I assure you, I never was more amused than I have been by the stupid vulgarity of my wealthy host: he is as unlike the society I have been accustomed to, as if he belonged to another species of the breathing race; I am now convinced that the greatest misers will sometimes become prodigals through ostentation; and when once the frozen soul of avarice begins to thaw, it overflows all the bounds of reason or propriety. Sir Edward is a living instance of this remark; his kindness is of so cloying a nature, that the very heart of friendship sickens at it; he mistakes profusion for hospitality, and magnificence for taste: his attention fatigues, and his conversation disgusts: I am not suffered to think for myself during the routine of the twenty-four hours; in the morning I am roused at eight o'clock, long before my usual time, to partake of a splendid breakfast, prepared in the Turkish pavilion! At noon I am dragged,

dragged, scorching in the sun, to view the Gloucestershire hills from the farthest end of the park. At dinner I am entreated to eat of every thing, and compelled to drink till the sun sets; even then my task of toil does not subside; a profuse supper closes the day, when I am suffered to retire, overwhelmed with fatigue, feverish, half intoxicated, detesting Sir Edward, and out of humour with myself for my stupid compliance with his tiresome propositions. Then the language of the man is so perfectly ridiculous and uncouth, "my Lord," and "your Lordship," constitute, at least, one half of the words that compose his conversation.

"You see, my Lord, we know how to live," said Sir Edward this morning, while cutting a pine apple at breakfast; "don't imagine that all good things are confined to the tables of the nobility: I assure your Lordship, that my pinery is one of the first in the kingdom, let the other be where it will; to be sure it has cost me a world of money—but no matter for that; life is not life, my Lord, without good eating

and drinking. Then, there's my cellar! there is not a duke, I may say a prince, in Europe, who has better wine; thank God, I live as well as any Lord in the land! will your Lordship taste my frontinac?"

"I thank you, Sir Edward, but I never drink wine in the morning."

"So much the worse for you, my Lord," answered the Knight; "I hate slip-flops, I never taste tea, 'tis only fit for women and coxcombs."

"You are very civil, I must confess;" said Lady Watkins, settling her elbows, and displaying her long ruffles; "don't you see, brother, that Lord Acreland takes tea in preference to wine? a proof, I think, of his good breeding; for there is nothing so truly plebeian as guzzling from morning till night, in the way you do; I am sure it is no wonder that you are such a monstrous porpoise."

"Why yes," replied Sir Edward, "all the city will bear witness that I am of some weight."

"So

“ So is an elephant, brother ;” said Lady Watkins, fanning herself with peculiar grace !—“ and I really am at a loss to say, which is the greatest curiosity of the two !”

“ Mind your own business, and look at home for beauty ;” replied Sir Edward : “ why, I appeal to my Lord, if you don’t look like the wax Queen Elizabeth in Westminster Abbey !—Who made you a judge of gentility ? I should not think of taking lessons from a Welch mountaineer ! hey, my Lord ?”

Here a loud laugh totally disconcerted the venerable lady for some moments ; at last, recovering her speech, she replied, “ Your vulgarity, brother, is pretty notorious, and I am only astonished that a man of real fashion should condescend to form an alliance with such a mercenary Hottentot. You have almost broken your daughter’s heart, but you cannot break mine. I shall leave the abbey to-morrow ; Sir Philip may remain here, if he thinks proper.” Again a loud laugh from Sir Edward.—Lady Watkins continued.

H 3

“ I shall

“ I shall not quit the table, my respect for Lord Acreland will detain me till breakfast is over, when, you may be assured, I shall withdraw; a bear would be a more desirable companion, in my opinion, for, at least, one might have the pleasure of keeping the animal muzzled.”

I endeavoured to accommodate this unlucky dispute, but in vain; for the more Lady Watkins was disconcerted, the more Sir Edward, by nodding and winking, evinced his satisfaction. At last, unable to bear his coarse attacks, and absolutely mortified by his grimace, she rose with most majestic scorn, and after politely inquiring whether I had any commands to town, left the pavilion; Miss Clarendon followed.

“ Thank God they are off!” exclaimed Sir Edward; “ Now we’ll take a walk, my Lord.”

“ You must pardon me,” said I, “ I have letters to write.”

“ I can ease your Lordship of that burthen,” answered the Knight; “ you may let young Belmont write them; he’ll do

it

it in the twinkling of an eye; my clerks always write my letters; 'tis Belmont's business, and he has nothing else to do; 'twill keep his hand in:—let the young ones work; I have toiled many a long year, or I should never have been as rich as I am. Come, come, my Lord, let's lose no time; your Lordship has not seen my hot-houses, now the sun is upon them, you will see the fruit in the highest perfection!"

"The heat will be insupportable, Sir Edward;" answered I.

"Well, well," said he, "if we find it too hot, we can adjourn to the grotto; your Lordship will think that cold enough, I warrant. And let me tell you, for your government, there isn't a cooler retreat in the three kingdoms than my grotto! 'tis made of Bristol spar, and a spring runs through it, that would almost freeze a body, as one may say."

"If so," answered I, "do you not think that the sudden transition from suffocating heat to intense cold, may prove dangerous?"

“I find you are but a puny one, my Lord,” replied the accomplished Knight. “You shall have your own way. But I insist on your seeing the Roman arch which stands at the entrance of the wilderness; it was brought all the way from Italy.”

“Most likely,” answered I, “if it is Roman.”

“Yes,” continued Sir Edward, “but I’ll have it down; I hate rubbish, and ruins of every sort; they serve as a kind of memento, my Lord, and we cits like to see things look flourishing. Neither do I relish the pedestal, and the urn, that stands in the middle of the wilderness; to be sure, it cost a power of money; and they say, it contained the ashes of a Roman emperor. My sister Juley could tell you all about it—I think she called him, Hell-i-o-gabble-us, or some such queer name. ’Tis a dismal piece of business, and always puts me in mind of death.”

“’Tis rather natural, certainly,” answered I, “that the remains of one, who
lived

lived centuries ago, should remind you of mortality." He proceeded.—

"I see nothing to admire in such trash, my Lord; I had rather be master of a few iron chests, well crammed, than of all the Roman urns, filled with dust, in the creation."

"So many," answered I, "would render them common, and consequently diminish their value."

"Why," continued Sir Edward, "there's Mr. Bronze, the traveller; why, he made me a present of some medals found in the place which was swallowed up by red hot cinders—I forgot the name, 'twas something about Hercules; I had all the filth and verdigrease scoured off, to see who coined 'em, but the devil a bit the wiser was I! I couldn't make out a letter! So I gave 'em to my sister Juley, who is fond of such knick-knacks."

"You must excuse me, Sir Edward," answered I, interrupting this interesting intelligence; "I really have letters to write."

H 5

"I'll

"I'll attend your Lordship to the library," said he, "where you will find pens, ink, and paper; don't be sparing of either, my Lord; I buy my paper in large quantities; it don't cost me half what your Lordship gives for it, because we citizens always pay ready money."

"Punctuality is the soul of business," answered I.

"Aye, 'tis soul and body too, my Lord," replied Sir Edward; "for it preserves the present and provides for the future, as one may say. And, after all, there's nothing like taking care of the main chance: the world is a sort of a lottery—we can't all have prizes; some draw money, and some draw titles, and some draw blanks.—I have the first, you have the second,—and those that have the third, must make the best on't."

"It is our duty, Sir Edward, to assist those who are less fortunate than ourselves."

"I can't see that, my Lord," replied the Knight; "we are all born with hands, and one can work as well as another."

“ But we are not all born with talents,” said I.

“ So much the better,” answered Sir Edward, “ they only lead people into folly.—Why, there is sister Pengwynn, they call her a woman of talents, and what does she get by ’em ?—Why, she is an old maid at fifty ! If she had been like other folks, she might have got a rich husband, and have had all the luxuries of life.—Talents, now-a-days, have little respect paid to ’em ; they enjoy but a life of starvation, as one may say. I hate men of talents for this cause, my Lord ; they are damned poor and damned impudent ; for which reason they never darken my doors.”

“ The poverty, too often the companion of talents, in this country, is a national discredit,” said I.

“ As to the credit of the nation,” answered Sir Edward, “ look upon ’Change ! there you’ll see it flourishing in all its glory ; but you won’t find many men of talents there, I can promise you. We look sharp after the substantials, and leave the shadows to your end of the town : we

are the sterling gold—you are the tinsel as one may say."

I had just time to make my bow for this civil remark, when we entered the library.

"A fine collection of books, my Lord, though I can't say I'm ever fond of reading; I have had them furbished up, however, since I purchased them; 'twas an expensive jobb; I had all the old volumes new bound and gilt; all those in foreign languages I have removed into the lumber room; some old musty manuscripts I ordered to be burnt; so that what with dressing, and decorating, and routing, and burning, the shelves make a tolerably genteel appearance. I have added some choice books to the collection. Smith's Wealth of Nations; Anderson on Commerce; Stewart's Political Economy; Postlethwaite's Dictionary; Mortimer's Every Man his own Broker; and a few more of the like: nothing better than minding business; fortune must be courted—pleasure always follows. All the opposite side belongs to my daughter; the Poets, Shakspeare,

Shakspeare, Novels, Magazines, and such like nonsense, only fit for women and fools. Your Lordship won't want amusement."

I sat myself down to the library table; Sir Edward understood the hint.

"I see, my Lord, the turtle is come! They are bringing it up the park! Will you excuse my leaving you for a moment?"

"Most readily; for as long as you please," answered I. Sir Edward now released me, and I began my letter. I had scarcely written three lines, when a servant entered with a plate of Sandwich's, and a decanter of Madeira. I declined both; and again resumed my pen. Before I had finished another sentence, Sir Edward returned.

"My Lord, we are just going to drag the fish-pond; full of excellent carp; will your Lordship see the business?"

I wished him in his pond, with his carp, with all my soul! Yet I so far governed my vexation, as to decline his proposal with a tolerable degree of temper: "I am

no

no epicure, Sir Edward," said I, "any fish will do for me."

"So much the worse for you, my Lord;" answered the Knight. "When I am in town I generally step to Billingsgate and buy my own fish."

"Very likely;" said I, continuing my letter.

"Fish is an excellent thing when eat with Quin's sauce!" said Sir Edward; "I never suffer a first course to appear without it."

"With all my heart;" answered I, still writing.

"We will have the turtle to-morrow, my Lord."

"When you please;" replied I, without taking my eyes off the paper. "But if you will proceed to your fish-pond, I will immediately follow. My letter must go by this day's post, it is of consequence."

"Shall I send Belmont to finish it for you, my Lord?"

"No, no," answered I; "his writing won't do for me."

"He

"He writes a fine mercantile hand, my Lord," said Sir Edward.

"Will you have the goodness to lead the way?" answered I; "I shall be with you in five minutes." He left the library not perfectly satisfied with my impatient tone of voice. The instant he was outside the door, in came Lady Watkins.

"My brother is gone to see the miraculous draught of fishes! He is a strange being!" said she.

"He is indeed, Lady Watkins!" answered I.

"I am tormented to death in this house, my Lord."

"So am I, Lady Watkins!"

"One has not a moment to one's self, my Lord."

"I am perfectly of your opinion," answered I; "therefore I will take another opportunity to finish my letter." So saying, I folded up the paper, and accompanied Lady Watkins to the fish-pond.

We were hailed by Sir Edward, with, "Make haste! here's a shew that would put the whole city in an uproar! Such carp!

carp ! such jack ! why my mouth waters at the very sight of 'em ; how I long to eat 'em ! Now's your time, my Lord ! pick and choose."

"Indeed, Sir Edward," answered I, "it is a matter of perfect indifference to me ; I am really no epicure, and understand very little about cooking."

"My brother understands nothing else ;" said Lady Watkins.

"I like that !" exclaimed the Knight : "How came I to get a fortune then, that would buy a title for Sophy ? When our father was first taken into partnership by Mr. Agio, the Genoa merchant, I believe he didn't think that his grand-daughter would marry a Lord."

Lady Watkins was near fainting with confusion. "You may depreciate your ancestors as much as you please, brother," said she, "but our mother was of a noble family, and related to people of the first consequence ! Was she not cousin to the Winpennys, of Winpenny-Hall ? and did not her uncle's youngest son marry the eldest daughter of Sir Leonard Lovegain, of

of Lovegain Castle? Was not her godfather, Lord Mayor of London? and did she not finish her education at Saint Omers? I am sure her family arms used to hang up in our father's hall, and it was as handsome a composition, as any that ever came from the hands of the herald."

"Poh!" said Sir Edward, "it was not fit to make a sign of till I added the supporters; there I think my taste was evident. What with them, and the motto, which, by the by, was also of my choosing, my coach cut some figure, to be sure, on a Lord Mayor's Day: and my wife used to go about in it as genteel as any Lord's lady in London."

"If your wife could peep out of her grave," answered Lady Watkins, "she would expire a second time, with confusion, to hear your ignorance and vulgarity. Indeed, you grow worse and worse!"

"I wish you would bridle your tongue, Fanny," replied Sir Edward; "why, my Lord is ashamed to hear you!"

"Pray don't involve me in your quarrel;" said I. "No person admires Lady Watkins

Watkins more than I do ; and I should feel an infinite degree of mortification in losing the honour of her good opinion."

Thus ended the second contest since sun-rise. You shall hear from me again in a post or two.—

We have a Mr. Belmont here ; the adopted son of Sir Philip Watkins. The young man is not ill educated, neither is he deficient in spirit, or natural talents : yet he perpetually reminds me of the hero in a romance : he is sentimental, studious, and rather intelligent than otherwise ; but if I mistake not, he will soon be disgusted with his new occupation. Lady Watkins doats on him ; he governs Sir Philip entirely : I cannot learn who his parents were, but I believe he is the nephew of a Welch clergyman. The good old Baronet means to make him his heir, and his estate, I am told, is no inconsiderable one.

Sir Edward has more than once given offence to this Cambrian hero, whose high mind, and irritable temper, soon reduced the Knight to terms of accommodation.

Awkward

Awkward apologies on the part of Sir Edward, and earnest entreaties on that of Sir Philip, prevailed so far, that the haughty Mr. Belmont condescended to display the olive: though not before his brows were crowned with the laurel of victory. I am no encourager of arrogance, and like to see the little world moving in its proper sphere: yet I must own there is something about this young Hotspur, that excites admiration: of one thing I am certain—he will not be the intimate of my house. Miss Clarendon is not deficient in discernment; and if husbands will introduce family temptations, they must expect to be dignified with family honours.—That sin shall never lay on my head!

The dinner-bell rings.—I hear Sir Edward bustling along the gallery!—Farewell for the present,

Your's truly,

ACRELAND.

LETTER

LETTER XIV.

The Rev. Mr. JONES to CHARLES BELMONT.

Caermarthenshire.

YOUR letter, my dear Charles, conveyed to me at once the most pleasing, and the most distressing intelligence. The satisfaction I felt at the idea of your being permanently settled, was, nevertheless, much diminished by the account you give of Sir Edward Clarendon. Be assured, Sir Philip only means to try your temper by this sudden fancy; you never had any reason to suppose he intended you for a man of business, neither can I believe you will be under the necessity of making it your pursuit when it shall please Heaven to take your patron and benefactor.

I intreat you to follow his advice in every respect: true friendship is a gem of such inestimable value, that the acquirement of it is worth our labour, and the preservation of it worth our study. There does not exist a more amiable pair than

Sir

Sir Philip and my Lady. Remember their virtues, and respect them accordingly.

You cannot imagine how happy your welfare makes me ! From your infancy I have loved you as dearly as if you had been my own ; and I could not have experienced more anxiety for the prosperity of a son, than I have ever felt for that of my worthy pupil.

Now, my dear boy, let me proceed to examine the other points of your last letter. Let me also advise you as a friend, a poor old friend, who has neither interest to gratify, or authority to controul. I know you to be honourable, as you are sensible ; generous, as you are affectionate ; and for these reasons I presume to offer my counsel without reserve. You have ever followed my precepts, and I should grieve if you rejected them, on a business which appears to me as the most serious of your life. I believe you will be able to anticipate the subject : I shall therefore proceed without any farther prelude.

Request permission to leave Clarendon Abbey ; return to London, and apply your
mind

mind to business without delay. There is danger, much danger in remaining where you are ! Ask your own heart if it is safe, and tell me the result of the question in your next letter.

You have described Miss Clarendon, with a degree of enthusiasm, that makes me consider the portrait as more flattering than it is correct. I have heard that she is a charming woman ; but you have pictured a divinity ! You talk of her mind and her virtues.—you have only known her a few weeks, and may be deceived in your opinion of both. She is of the bewitching sex ; her beauty may, perhaps, blind you ; and you read her mind through the flattering medium of exterior graces. I only venture this idea, upon the bare possibility of such a deception ; I do not pretend to lessen the attractions of the young lady ; I only wish you to judge without prejudice, and to hear without resentment. You think she is partial to you ; can the confidence of a woman flatter your vanity, when you recollect that she flies to you as a resource from
certain

certain misery ? Perhaps she dislikes you one degree less than she does Lord Acreland ; in such a preference there is the danger of her loving some other object still better than either. The wretch, pressed by the consuming conflagration, will leap from a tower to preserve life, at the hazard of decrepitude ; the sailor, after struggling amidst the tempest, lands on the desert beach, and with delight beholds the sheltering cavern ; but we are not to conclude that he would have selected such a retreat, had he been at liberty to choose. The despair of this lovely woman may tempt her to take refuge in your arms, and the asylum you will afford her, will demand her gratitude ; but her heart may still be destined for some happier mortal. You think that supreme felicity would follow such an union : amuse not your fancy with chimeras that will inevitably lead you to destruction. Be careful how you indulge the sensibility of your nature : consider Miss Clarendon already as the wife of Lord Acreland ; and do not, I
conjure

conjure you, do not forget that she is the daughter of your patron.

Forgive me, my dear Charles; forgive the zeal which originates in the purest affection! Any instance of imprudence that may tarnish your honour, or give the tongue of calumny a plea to blacken your fair name, would bend my grey hairs to the grave with the most agonizing sorrow. If I thought that a journey from my native mountains, barefooted, and alone, would rouse you from the dream that lulls your reason, I would joyfully undertake it.

Call to mind the precepts of your old tutor; recollect how often he has counselled you to check the lively fallies of your youth, and to subdue the romantic enthusiasm of a too irritable imagination. He who would pass through life serenely, and honourably, must controul his rebellious passions, and only cherish those that lead to the acquirement of rational knowledge. 'Tis not by books alone, that the mind is to be formed; a man may become a pedant by laborious study; but he must
read

read mankind, he must mingle in the mazes of society, to be a citizen of the world. The retirement in which you have been cherished, does not tend to the cultivation of this universal knowledge. You are now breathing a contagious atmosphere. Every surrounding object is replete with fascination ;—reflect and take my counsel.

We shall expect Sir Philip, and my Lady, at Christmas. The hospitalities of Watkin Hall will not, I am persuaded, be forgotten. I shall lament your absence ; all the village mourns for your loss ;—the women look forlorn, and the children, with lisping tongues, often inquire when you will return ? Your poplar walk is kept in perfect repair ; and I would prosecute any man living, who should destroy the moss-covered bank, which was the favourite scene of your boyish studies. The trees you planted are all full of fruit, and every day I visit them with a melancholy pleasure. Ah ! my poor Charles, I cry, never shall I see thee more ! I am old and infirm ; and it is a long journey to thy

native mountains. Thou art occupied in new pursuits, in contemplating new scenes; thou hast my blessing, boy, wherever thou art, and my fervent prayers for thy happiness!

Old Morgan, and his wife, often weep when they speak of you; your annual donation shall be continued; they are poor, and it will be hard to rob declining age of any little comfort it has been accustomed to experience. I grow feeble every day, seventy years have passed over my head, and blessed be Providence, my heart is free of offence to all the world. I have borne the ills of life with patience; for the good, I have been grateful; to the evil, resigned. My latter days have been tranquil in your society,—they have been the happiest which Heaven has allotted me!

My first knowledge of you was strange and unaccountable! It produced a scene that pierced my heart; you was then an infant, and unconscious of what happened: I shall never forget it! Good Lady Watkins! Her exquisitely sensible bosom was

wrung

wrung with pity. 'Twas on a cold December's night; the rain beat hard upon my little dwelling; the wind howled over the mountains, when poor Morgan arrived; he held you in his arms, your innocent hands were stretched forth, as if to implore protection. But no more of this! time will develope every mystery!

Write to me, Charles; do not neglect your old friend. I have not many years to live, and I should grieve to be forgotten on this side the grave. If your mind is enlightened, I have the pride of having been its earliest tutor; if it should ever be contaminated by an intercourse with the world, I trust I shall not live to behold the change.

Again, let me intreat you to leave Clarendon Abbey. If you are determined not to follow this injunction, I have only one more favour to solicit. Open your heart without reserve; make me acquainted with every step you take: consider me as your friend, and forget that I was your tutor. My advice cannot hurt you, and

even that shall be withdrawn, if it is offensive.

I am writing near the little casement of your study. Alas! Charles, the landscape fades hourly; the bloom of summer, like the glowing tint on the cheek of youth, is transient; beauty blossoms, ripens, and falls, as the flowrets on the mountain, and is, like them, succeeded by others equally fair, and equally fragile! Think on your friend, Charles, and remember the words of the philosophic Beattie,

“O! soothe him, whose pleasures like thine pass
away,

“Full quickly they pass, but they never return.”

Another year will, perhaps, finish my journey! and when you next visit our village, and stroll perchance to the consecrated precincts of our house of prayer, nothing will remain, to remind you of your old tutor, except the uncouth stone that will bear his epitaph!

Now, before I conclude my letter, suffer me to say one word respecting your
quarrel

quarrel with Sir Edward Clarendon; 'tis difficult to give advice on a subject which depends entirely on personal feeling; I can only declare, that I think it nobler to forgive an enemy, than to take his life; neither is it consistent with reason or religion, to condemn a father for his zeal in the cause of an only child.—If ever you are a parent, you will forgive Sir Edward Clarendon.

Farewell, my dear Charles; I trust that I shall be permitted to participate in all your griefs, as I shall involuntarily rejoice in all that contributes to your felicity, being

Your faithful friend,

and humble servant,

EVAN JONES.

LETTER XV.

SOPHIA CLARENDON to Mrs. HORTON.

Clarendon Abbey, Monday.

YOU will not be surpris'd at my long silence, when I acquaint you, that owing to an unlucky accident, I have, for these ten days past, been forbid the use of my pen. Your kindness, and the interest you feel in whatever tends to the promotion of my happiness, demand my gratitude. Alas! I lament that I have no pleasing intelligence to communicate: Sir Edward persists in exacting obedience to his commands; Lord Acreland's attentions wear the confidence of success; and Charles Belmont is as amiable, and fascinating as ever!

Lady Watkins, whose age and remote education promised the most austere manners, is my best consolation under the pressure of afflictions which, I fear, will only terminate with my existence. Since my recovery, Sir Edward is more than
usually

usually anxious for the celebration of those forms that will consign me to misery: Lord Acreland, conscious that my father has determined in his favour, scarcely condescends to converse on the subject in my hearing; and, if ever he touches on the detested topic, it is only to mention, with easy indifference, the improvements he intends to make in Sussex; or the pleasure which his sister, Lady Selina Wantworth, will experience in forming me for the great world, and in presenting me to all her fashionable associates.

During the period of my confinement in my chamber, Lord Acreland employed himself with his violoncello, or in making visits to the neighbouring nobility; while Mr. Belmont passed every day at my favourite hermitage, frequently remaining there till the last gleam of light faded from the surrounding landscape. I used to observe him from my window; his pace was slow, his arms were folded, an air of melancholy marked his steps. I could see him distinctly, till he reached the wood; and, with a telescope which I had removed

from the library to view the distant scenery, I could perceive him at the window of the hermitage, leaning pensively on his hand, and for whole hours unvarying his attitude. What an extraordinary being! My father thinks him deranged in his intellects; and Lady Watkins says he informed Sir Philip, that he was afraid he should "make nothing of him."

Oh! tasteless, indiscriminating thought! Can the plodding occupations of sordid minds tend to polish such a gem of nature? He is already perfect! inestimable in value, but dangerous to contemplate!

Fortune is not blind, she is only the cunning rival of nature: she abhors the being, formed to captivate by the sublime attributes of genius, sentiment, and sensibility! Her jealousy withholds those gifts which she eagerly bestows upon the dull and senseless: if by chance she confers her favours on the enlightened, she gives, as their companion, that indolence of temper, and that contempt for riches, which counteract their enjoyments; and, with little minds, serve to stigmatize instead of exalt their

their possessor. Thus we see the most transcendent genius generally accompanied with misfortunes ; thus the proudest talents of our island have often been the prey of poverty, and sometimes of despair.

Mr. Belmont is, within these few days, an altered being ! His placid manly countenance now bears the deepest *traits* of melancholy meditation ! Lady Watkins has, more than once, remarked it to me : why to me ? I wish he would depart before my hand is given to Lord Acreland. I know, too well I know, that he would pity me :—that he would feel interested in my fate ; perhaps too tenderly.

If I want resolution to disobey my father ; if I feel delicately towards Lord Acreland ; if I dread the resentment of my family, or the ridicule of the world, you cannot blame me. You refuse to explain your two last letters ; you deny me that candid elucidation of their contents which friendship demands, and which would, perhaps, afford me a plausible pretext for refusing this alliance. I know that I shall be the most miserable of human creatures !

I shall either sink into apathy, or madden with the anguish of my fate. If your heart was not torpid to all the sensations of humanity, you would afford me the means of escaping from the misery that awaits me. You say, in your letter, that "reason, nature, and justice, forbid the alliance!" Yet, you can behold me opposing such powerful motives, and suffer me to encounter all the pangs of dreadful apprehension, all the humiliations of future repentance, and all the horrors of a detested marriage! I will wait till to-morrow's post arrives, before I conclude this letter.

Tuesday.

My aunt, Juliana, came yesterday evening to the abbey. She brought a quantity of white ribband for the wedding favours. The idea is insupportable! When she talked of the marriage, I felt that trembling agitation, which told me to beware! Gracious God! what have I done to provoke thy displeasure? Why am I the most persecuted of mortals? Oh! I am a coward!

coward!—Hear, hear my confession, and then judge for yourself.

Last night, after I had began this letter, Sir Edward informed me that there was no occasion for farther procrastination of the marriage; and that he should fix the day with Lord Acreland immediately. This fatal intelligence was communicated in the presence of Mr. Belmont. I made no reply; but resolved, in my own mind, to elope from the abbey as soon as the family should retire to rest.

It was midnight before the house was perfectly still. I stole from my chamber, and descended to the library, which has a small door that opens on the lawn, purposing to hire a chaise at the village, only half a mile distant, and to proceed immediately to London. With caution I unbolted the shutters, and opened the glass door. I flew across the lawn with incredible swiftness. When I came to the entrance of the wood, I ventured to look back. The moon shone dimly through a clouded atmosphere; the stillness of the scene was awful, and the consciousness of

my own imprudent act, made me shudder with horror!

I stopped for a moment; reflection struck upon my heart. A light in my father's chamber increased my perturbation. "What am I doing?" said I, flying like a guilty wretch! escaping from parental authority to become a dependant upon strangers! Leaving the abode of honourable protection, to encounter the insults of the world, the pangs of self-reproach! I stood like the poor mariner escaped from a tempestuous sea! The village clock struck one; I again looked towards the abbey. The idea of Lord Acreland inspired me with courage, and I proceeded to a small park door, the key of which I had secured the preceding evening.

My road lay through the wood; I had not advanced twenty paces, among the thick woven trees, when I observed the clouds gathering, and felt a slight shower falling between the branches. I ran towards the hermitage for shelter; and, on entering the door found myself in the arms of Charles Belmont!

"Miss

"Miss Clarendon," said he, "this indeed is kind! I did not hope for such happiness! How, oh! tell me how I shall express my gratitude?" I could not speak: my astonishment prevented the power of utterance. He knelt at my feet; he bathed my hand with tears. "Angelic woman!" said he; "why am I destined to behold you the victim of ambition?"

The rays of the moon fell upon his face; his features no longer wore their usual placidity; his looks were fraught with agitation; his whole mien was wild; his voice quick and impetuous.

"Fly!" said he, "fly, while you are yet safe! I cannot answer for my own rebellious nature! I would not abuse this generous confidence;—but I am frantic with despair! you are dangerous to behold! Leave me, Sophia; do not suffer a wretch like me to breathe a thought that may contaminate the purity of your soul!"

I endeavoured to disengage my hand, which he still held with convulsive eagerness. "Yet stay one moment," said he, "and tell me your motive for visiting, at
this

this unusual hour, a spot where I did not dream of meeting a companion."

"Mr. Belmont," I answered I, "you are not indebted to me for this extraordinary meeting; chance, not design, directed my steps to the hermitage."

"Chance!" cried he, "Oh! do not tell me so; this is not an hour for innocence and beauty to wander unguarded; some reason must have induced you. Tell me, I conjure you, whither you are wandering; I do not flatter myself—believe me, I do not, that you came in search of such a wretch as I am: this has been for many nights my only resting place; here I hoped to meditate without interruption."

"Why do you indulge such melancholy thoughts?" said I.

"Because," answered he, "I know that my destiny is sorrow; we cannot fly from fate! nor can I forget that an angel possesses my affection, interests my soul, commands all its faculties, animates my being, tears me from repose, and maddens my weak brain!" Here he lost sight of reason; he clasped me to his heart, with a degree

degree of violence that roused and alarmed me.

"Charles!" said I, "this is unworthy of your mind! This violation of your promise, not to abuse my confidence, will make me hate you."

"What! hate me for adoring you?" said he wildly. "Can you reduce me to the most abject misery? Can you calmly sacrifice the being you have so completely vanquished?"

Still he held my hand; his manner was more terrifying than ever. I knew not what to do. If I proceeded on my first plan, probably he would insist upon accompanying me; if I returned to the abbey—nothing less than disgrace could be the consequence: thus I reasoned, and my perplexity increased every moment.

"Let me depart, Mr. Belmont," said I; "if you have either friendship for me, or regard for my reputation, do not detain me;—it is not generous, it is not honourable, to take this advantage of an event which really originated in accident.—You

have

have forfeited much of my good opinion already; believe me you have; and it will depend on your conduct, whether or not I shall withdraw it wholly."

The solemnity of my manner awed him into decorum;—he let go my hand. "There, madam," said he, "you see how obedient I can be—when you command." I was going.—"Is it possible," continued Mr. Belmont, "that you can leave me in this state of distraction? If I have offended you, let me only ask one question.—How can you blame the frenzy which you have yourself occasioned?"

I made no reply.—He waited for my answer with patient submission; he approached me, I drew back.

"Why are you alarmed, Sophia?" said he, softening his voice. "Believe me, I am too much the creature of your power, even to offend you. Do you hate me? only tell me that, and I will be satisfied."

I made no answer; my heart was throbbing with anguish.

"Thank Heaven!" said he; "you have not

not courage to pronounce my doom. Will you consent to be the wife of Lord Acreland?"

"Mr. Belmont," said I, "you know my unfortunate situation! My father is inexorable. I depend wholly on his mercy:—it is too late to recede, and I must submit."

"That is your determination; your final determination; then I am content," cried he; "I will not repine.—Splendour awaits you; the blandishments of rank will render you happy; the pleasures of the world will never fail to charm a heart that pants with vanity, that sighs for adulation; I shall rejoice in your triumphs—indeed I shall: Lord Acreland has the felicity to be beloved by you, and I trust he will deserve your affection."

When he began his reproach, I was at the door of the hermitage; but the inhumanity of his expressions drew me back again. I instantly condemned myself for such weakness, and resentment prompted my reply. "I thank you, Mr. Belmont," said I: "I thank you sincerely—for, had
you

you not thrown off the disguise that charmed my senses, I might have loved you. I might have wanted that resolution which now enables me to bid you adieu for ever."

Oh! ungenerous, fickle, vain, seducing, barbarous woman!" exclaimed Mr. Belmont. "Sex, inexplicable! false as the world, capricious as the wind that changes every hour! What a fool am I! to be the slave of one whose mind is unworthy of my adoration." Then turning towards me, he continued; "Miss Clarendon I will not detain you; Lord Acreland, perhaps, will be displeased if he hears of your condescension. I will bear my destiny."

He threw himself on the matted couch, his tears fell on the pillow; I watched him for a moment; the palpitation of my heart bid me fly, while I yet had power. I looked towards the abbey, and to my astonishment, observed lights in the library from whence I had escaped.

Judging that the family had missed me, and that pursuit would be the consequence, I determined to hasten back with all the

expedition my trembling limbs allowed me, and to leave the event to chance, or the explanation that may occur on my arrival.

I had scarcely reached the lawn, when Mr. Belmont overtook me. "Why will you not hear me?" said he; "perhaps such an opportunity will not again present itself."

"I trust it never will;" answered I. "Heaven forbid that my heart should ever again be exposed to such a trial! If you have the smallest regard for my repose, you will conceal yourself till I am safe in my chamber. If we are seen together, the consequences will be dreadful!"

"Will you forgive and forget all that has passed in the hermitage?" said he.

"I will forgive your frenzy;" answered I: "but I never shall forget the scene you mention." I now observed some one with a light descending the steps of the portico.

"For Heaven's sake fly," said I; "conceal yourself in the shrubbery near the grotto; I will forgive, I will forget any thing, only obey me in this instance.

When

When I reach my chamber, I will place the light in my window, you may then conclude that all is quiet."

"Remember," cried Belmont, "you will forget my reproaches."

"You have nothing to fear from my resentment;" answered I: "the purity of my own heart will teach me to forget the frailty of your's." We were now not far from the abbey; the moon still shone clearly; and my dress, being of a light colour, made me a conspicuous object.

"Dear Charles!" said I, unguardedly, "pray, pray conceal yourself."

I now heard Sir Edward's voice, loudly vociferating, "Search the grounds! Call up Mr. Belmont, and order two horses to be saddled immediately."

My terror was undefinable! At the steps of the portico my father met me.

"So! Miss Clarendon," said he, "you have made a fine rumpus in the family! Where have you been tramping at this unreasonable hour? your conduct is infamous! But, thank God! I shall soon get quit of you." At this moment a servant

entered

entered the hall, and informed Sir Edward, that Mr. Belmont was not to be found.

“You don’t tell me so!” said my father; “then I am convinced of what I have long suspected! I will go this instant and wake Sir Philip; he shall know what a viper he has introduced into my family.”

“Let me intreat you, Sir,” said I, “to consider what you are doing. Such rash conduct may prove destructive to the future hopes of a deserving object. I alone am to blame; the serenity of the night tempted me to leave my chamber; I knew that I was safe near the abbey: it will be cruel and unjust to condemn Mr. Belmont for any thoughtless act of mine.”

“I won’t hear your canting hypocritical excuses:” said Sir Edward. “Quit my sight; and be assured that you shall soon be released from my authority.”

I retired to my chamber, and instantly concealed the light, lest it should be mistaken by Mr. Belmont, for the signal I had promised to display. I opened the window opposite the shrubbery, and there kept

kept watch, in case he should venture towards the abbey.

In a few minutes I heard the sound of footsteps, and saw Mr. Belmont approaching. "Charles," said I, "for Heaven's sake, make your escape; if you are discovered I am lost for ever."

"Fear nothing, Sophia;" answered he; "be assured I can defend myself."

"For my sake be prudent;" said I. "If you regard my peace of mind you will be gone;—fly this instant. Sir Edward has seen all the doors barred, and a servant, armed, is placed to watch during the whole night. He has sworn that I shall instantly be married to Lord Acreland. Oh! Charles, if you love me—be gone!" I threw him the key of the park door from the window.

"Your will shall be obeyed. Heaven! Heaven will protect you;" said he: "dearest, most beloved of women—I will trouble you no more!"

I conclude that he slept at the village, and from thence proceeded to London. Next post will probably bring letters from

him, with an explanation of his motive for leaving the abbey, and some plausible reason for not returning,

Oh ! Louisa ! how shall I meet Charles Belmont, when I am the wife of Lord Acreland ? Let your answer rescue me from the destruction that threatens : sustained by that hope, I will endeavour to protract the marriage till I hear from you again.

Farewell,

Your's affectionately,

SOPHIA CLARENDON.

LETTER XVI.

CHARLES BELMONT to SOPHIA CLARENDON.

Henley.

YOU commanded me to fly from you, and I have obeyed your wishes. The misery of beholding you the wife of Lord Acreland, I shall, at least, escape ; the agony I shall experience in knowing that such

such an event must take place, will not trouble your repose. I shall mourn in silence, and, I trust, be remembered with esteem. The recollection of your virtues will never be effaced while I have life; and my prayers for your felicity will only cease, with the sigh that shall terminate my existence.

If it is my misfortune to love you, it is also my pride! Far removed from hope, by the distributions of fate, I can only look back on what has past, as the martyr retraces a life of devotion! I have nothing to accuse myself of, that can tarnish my honour; I have to boast that my mind is impressed with one unvarying sentiment, and that of a nature which will exalt my name, for I shall never cease to adore the most perfect of women!

You cannot but remember the scene in the temple; and I can never forget the epithet of "villain!" I passed over the expression, not in consequence of Sir Edward's awkward excuses, and Sir Philip's earnest intreaties; but, because I could not hazard the existence of him who was
the

the author of your's. I could not destroy the source from whence all the light proceeds, which gilds my thorny path through a journey of sorrow and despair.

The event of last night, and your determination in favour of Lord Acreland, convinced me that my doom is hopeless. Oh, Sophia! had you felt the smallest affection for me, you would have fled from persecution, and been mine for ever. I know Sir Philip's nature;—I know it is generous and humane! He would have pardoned an offence, where the temptation was too powerful for reason to withstand: who, except Sir Edward Clarendon, would condemn me for loving such an object?

The plan of pursuits which I shall henceforth adopt, will be congenial to my mind: I shall, in future, only seek for that fame which avarice cannot deny me. Mine shall be that glorious ambition which will either close the scene of my miseries, or make me feel conscious that I deserve your esteem. You will, perhaps, blame my hasty determination; but my honour has been impeached, I have re-

ceived an insult; I shall not acquit myself, till I have proved my courage, and defeated the calumny of Sir Edward Clarendon. You will say this is romantic enthusiasm;—the being that is sensible of your perfections, must be an enthusiast! Idiots can admire; infants can distinguish that which pleases them: the coldest bosom cannot deny the fascinations of beauty. I have seen you, Sophia; I have heard your voice; I have witnessed your virtues; I have examined your heart! What then must be my conviction?—Can I feel less than adoration? Impossible!

I conjure you to soften the regret of Sir Philip and Lady Watkins; I dare not write to them; I have too long been a burthen on their yielding philanthropy: they have exemplified the most generous attachment towards me; they have loved me with the most tender affection; I have been indebted to them for every thing I have hitherto possessed; yet, notwithstanding all that gratitude could feel, or reason suggest, I have ever considered myself as a dependant on their bounty. A

I state

state of dependance is at best humiliating, and reflection does not fail to remind me, that in this instance it is disgraceful: Heaven has given me faculties; education has expanded them; and time has matured those intellectual powers which cannot remain inactive. I was created to labour for the benefit of society: and my heart throbs for that distinction which owes not its origin to the favour of a too partial patron. The only pre-eminence that the mind of man should be proud of, is that which it derives from innate qualities;—the smile of fortune is capricious, the splendour of the soul is immortal!

Now I am absent from you, I can reason; I can reflect; the lustre of your beauty dazzled my senses; the graces of your mind absorbed my faculties; I could not, with such an object before me, think or act like other beings. You may as well expect the Persian to forget the sun, as my heart to remain tranquil before the image of its idolatry.

Adieu, Sophia! remember, that from this hour, the independent spirit of Charles

K 2

Belmont

Belmont seeks—either the reward of valour, or the grave. To the former you will not deny a smile of approbation;—on the latter, you will bestow the tear of sensibility!

CHARLES BELMONT.

LETTER XVII.

Sir GEORGE FAIRFORD to Lord ACRE-
LAND.

Breconshire.

I ROSE early this morning, and again repaired to the scene of my last night's consternation. The whole of which appeared rather as a dream, than a reality. The countenance of the beautiful recluse which was still pictured on my brain; the roaring of the cataract, which still seemed to echo along the side of the mountain, and the recollection of the phantom which vanished when I pursued it, almost persuaded me that the whole was illusion.

I was,

I was, however, soon convinced that imagination had not deceived me; for, on entering the wood, the first person I met, was the poor old woman. She stopped, and inquired whither I was going.

“This is no thoroughfare, and please you, Sir,” said she. “This wood only leads to a ruined castle. Yonder path will take you into the main road.”

“My good friend,” answered I, “’tis to the ancient castle I wish to find my way. I believe you are the person whom I conversed with from the window last night.” She made no reply, but hobbled back with all the expedition that feeble age would permit. I followed slowly, and at a distance; for I perceived the agitation I had created in the breast of my venerable guide, and wished to avoid intruding abruptly on the solitude of her mistress!

Left to reflect, I could not help reproaching myself for the alarm my visit must have occasioned; and I felt doubly culpable, in again obtruding on the retirement of an unfortunate woman! Unfortunate she must be, thought I, who can

fly from all the world. A sweet seclusion, blessed with a few amiable companions; a small, but carefully selected society, is, perhaps, productive of more real pleasure, than an extensive circle of uninteresting associates: that any sensible mind should make choice of such delight, is more than probable—it is natural. But when we see a lovely being relinquish all the possibilities of consolation; hide herself in a melancholy nook, beneath a shattered fabric, which, with every blast of wind, threatens to bury her beneath its mouldering heaps; when we behold her shut up with age and infirmity; her only companion, an ignorant simple creature, incapable, almost, of participating, and still more of lightening the burthen of affliction; we reasonably conclude, that nothing less than despair could prompt such a sacrifice!

I had not resolution to approach the ruin: how to introduce myself, I knew not. To have become a volunteer in the indelicate task of developing what little I knew of her story, or to have required a more minute

explanation of the events which brought her to the mountains, would have been useless and unfeeling. I could not mention your name; that would not only have awakened her regret, but have placed you in a contemptible light; it would have proved to her, that her misfortunes had been the subject of your animadversion; that you had added to the injuries she has experienced from your conduct, the cruel and unjustifiable exposure of her humiliating circumstances. You have made her wretched, you have destroyed all her hopes, you have only one more act of inhumanity within your power; which is, that of drawing her misfortunes forth to public view, and of suffusing that cheek with blushes which has too long been drenched with tears! If Angelina has been the victim of your passions, you will plead her charms, and your own frailty, as your excuses. But there is no palliation for insult, when the warmth of affection subsides. The remembrance of her merit, and your past happiness, should be her protection against every thing that

can depreciate the one, or prove your ingratitude for the other.

If there is a single spark of virtue yet unextinguished in your bosom—reflect; let the breath of reason kindle it into a flame, whose blaze will, perhaps, shew you your own heart; I fear it will scarcely bear examination. It is not yet too late; you may exterminate the source which, while it teems with phantoms of delight, still nourishes the dæmons of remorse! When you have seriously reflected on the contents of this letter, I think you will confess the justice of my opinion.

Were I in your situation, I should certainly decline the union with Miss Clarendon. She is an amiable girl, dependent on a sordid father! That father, to gratify a degrading passion for empty distinctions, barter her fortune for your title! You will be some thousands the richer; but you will have millions of self-wounding reproaches, when you behold your lovely wife, disgusted with your attentions, shrinking from you, as the slave does from his tyrant; pining under the misery of compulsive

pulsive obedience—a purchased victim! or flying from your splendid mansion to mingle in scenes of dissipation and of vice, merely to forget herself;—if she can forget herself while she remembers you. Will not your honour be in danger, whenever fate presents to her an amiable seducer, whose age, manners, accomplishments, or person, may fascinate her senses? The female heart is tender, animated, proud, susceptible! If it does not love, it is a wretched vacuum: the world has no attraction for a mind unoccupied. The only sensation that fills the bosom of a devoted slave—is hatred: Miss Clarendon does not, cannot love the man whose proposals were made to her father; who becomes her husband in the way of traffic: who, fascinated by the splendour of her fortune, overlooks the graces of her mind; who, in his heart, despises the man with whom he forms an alliance; and blushes, while he bestows dignity on the dupe that feeds his avarice. These are hard truths; but say what you will, they

are truths, and I defy the most cunning sophist to contradict them.

My pen has carried me out of retirement into the busy bustling world. I have deserted the paths of sentiment for the admonitions of reflection. I have left a lovely, injured woman, for a misguided and ill-judging friend. But to continue my adventure.—

While I was absorbed in meditation, the old woman hastened towards me.

“Sir,” said she, “I have informed my mistress of your inquiries, and she wishes to know your business. She receives no strangers, and trusts you will excuse her declining your visit; any message that you will deliver to me shall be faithfully conveyed to her.”

“I have no message;” answered I; “but I wished to have had an interview with your lovely mistress.”

“You know her then?” said the simple creature.

“I never saw her;” answered I.

“Then how do you know so much about her beauty?”

“By

“By report only;” answered I.

“Alack!” said the old woman, “my poor lady was in hopes that all the world had forgot her. I have often heard her say so.”

“Her name is Sydenham;” said I.

“You are mistaken, Sir; my lady’s name is Arundal. She is a widow.”

I confess I was now at a loss how to act, or what to think. The mystery was so thickened, that there appeared no probability of my finding means to develope it. I wished the honest soul a good morning, and turned my steps towards the village.

When I arrived at the turnpike, my intelligent friend opened the gate as usual. “I hope your Honour has had a pleasant walk?” said he.

“I have been examining the remains of yonder castle.”

“Did you see the poor lady that lives in the cottage among the ruins?” said he.

“No: but I saw her venerable companion.” answered I.

"Aye, aye; I know whom your Honour means: 'tis old Martha. She has lived with the lady these seven years; and she often stops as she goes to the village to buy provisions, to talk about her sweet mistress!"

"Indeed! and what does she say of her?"

"Why, your Honour, she says, that the lady is a widow; that her husband was killed abroad; and that the news of his death so affected her mind, that she has never been in her proper senses since. I have seen old Martha weep many a time when she talked about it. Though she does not want for any thing: she has heaps of fine apparel, and silver, and rich things of all sorts; and she has a small picture, all done round with precious stones, which she will sit and cry over for whole hours without ceasing."

"Could I see that picture?" said I.

"I dare swear," answered he, "that Martha could satisfy your curiosity. I once went to the castle, when the lady
was

was out upon her rambles, to take her some flowers for her chimney. So we began talking about the matter: and Martha offered to shew me the cottage; 'tis nicely furnished. Then she bid me look at the picture: it hung at the head of the lady's bed: it was of a comely gentleman."

"When should I be most likely to find the old woman alone?"

"Why, your Honour may find her for most part of the day," answered he, "quite alone: for the lady passes much of her time in a sort of a cave to the right of the castle, which has a communication under ground to the tower. You may see it whenever you please, by climbing the hill; the entrance is near the cascade. It was dug out by the ancient Britons, and their bones were buried there; for history says that many fell when they defended their country against the Saxons.—I know little about these matters; but this I learnt from our curate, who is a good scholar, and a good man."

I now discovered by what means my fair recluse had vanished on the first night of my visiting the mountain; this explanation inspired me with courage to hope for farther success, and I hastened, in tolerable spirits, to my lodging, not a little gratified by the result of my morning's avocation.

It was Sunday, and in my way to the White Lion I met the good curate returning from church. He was accompanied by three lovely daughters and several fine boys, who, by the exact similarity of their dress, I concluded to be his sons. I bowed as I passed him: he returned the salute with a degree of respectful modesty that made a strong impression on my mind. I stopped till he was at some distance. He met a poor child, in a tattered, miserable garment. I observed him cross the road, and give something to the infant, who blessed him with both its little hands upraised to Heaven; and, instantly running to its blind companion, who stood resting against the wall, gave him

him the pious boon with evident exultation.

Thou art worthy of thy station, thought I. Thou art, indeed, the shepherd of thy flock; and their prayers will ascend to the throne of retribution! Thy philanthropy will not pass unseen by the All-seeing! He will repay thy mite a million fold. But I must not let thy deed be recorded on the fragile tablet of memory alone: I must inquire minutely into the cause why so much virtue remains in these regions of obscure poverty. Neglected, unassuming, philanthropic man of God! I will labour for thy welfare in the field of prosperity; nor will I rest till thou shalt reap the harvest worthy of thy toil!

I shall write by this post to Lord Hartfield; he has much church preferment to bestow in his family; and I wish you would second my request in favour of my poor village curate.

Soon after he was out of sight I found myself at home. My landlord, as usual, met me at the door, with his bill of fare.

I or-

I ordered dinner, and was served with as much expedition and neatness as I could have been with the establishment of an emperor.

I had scarcely finished my repast when the landlord ushered in a little lad about eight years of age, whom I instantly recognized to be one of the curate's sons. He held forth a basket of grapes, which, with much bowing and blushing, he informed me was humbly presented by his father.

I took the modest messenger of kindness by the hand: "My fine little fellow," said I, "present my best thanks to your father; tell him I accept his fruit with gratitude, and, with his permission, will repeat my acknowledgments in person as soon as I have dined."

"My father," said the little boy, while his countenance glowed with pleasure at the reception he experienced, "my father, Sir, is obliged to do evening duty; but when that is over I am certain he will be glad to see you."

I of-

I offered my visitor a glass of port: he assured me he never had tasted wine but once, and that he did not like it.

"What do you like?" said I.

"I like cakes, and such things," answered he.

"Then thou shalt have a feast, by all that is good," said I, slipping a guinea into his waistcoat pocket. His astonishment was visible.

"How many am I to buy?" said he, eagerly.

"Why, suppose you lay out a couple of shillings for to-day," said I; "will that be enough?"

"Aye, and plenty," answered he, instantly opening the door, and quitting the parlour. I saw him flying up the village, and I sat down to finish my bottle.

"Thou art happier," said I, "with one solitary guinea than the first potentate on earth with his uncounted millions!—Hard must be the bosom that could, at so small a price, refuse to cheer thy little heart! I am not quarrelsome, but I think I could bestow a thousand bastinadoes on
the

the wretch who would rob thee of thy treasure."

My lover of cakes was, in a few minutes, before me. "Here is your change," said he; "make haste and take it, for I want to go home, and divide my cakes with my brothers and sisters. I would not eat one by myself for all the world."

"Keep thy change, my little man," answered I, "and let me set down thy name, for we must be better acquainted."

"My name is David Lloyd," said he; "and pray what is your's?"

The simplicity of the little Welchman won my regard. "George Fairford, my brave little fellow," said I; "and I beg you not to forget that whenever during your life you should wish for a friend, you have nothing to do but to inquire for me."

"But how shall I find you?" said he.

"I will write you a direction," answered I. Upon opening my pocket-book, a paper fell on the table: it was a
twenty

twenty pounds Bank note. This was certainly meant by Providence for my new friend, thought I, and by Heavens he shall have it. Without farther prelude—"Here," said I, "here is my direction," giving him my name on a card, "and here is a piece of paper that will serve to treat your brothers and sisters with cakes till you hear from me again."

He looked at the note, and then at me: at last, putting it in his pocket, he bowed and left me. A tear of joy glistered in his eye; mine was ready to disgrace my manhood.

"What have I done?" said I. "'Tis now impossible to visit Mr. Lloyd. This boy will repeat what has passed. I could not bear to receive the thanks of such a man, and for such a sum! I will deny it wholly. No; I shall then draw shame and punishment on poor David. I will consider of it," said I, as I finished my last glass.

The village was crowded with lads and lasses, who were all thronging to a small farm, where it was their weekly custom to
re-

regale themselves with cakes and cyder.—The girls wore petticoats of fine stuff, striped with a variety of colours; short blue jackets, and large round beaver hats, the simple bands of which were decorated with field flowers. They all appeared to be cheerful and healthy. I contemplated these happy mountaineers near half an hour, and then set out on my evening's walk towards the ruin.

A thunder storm, which came rapidly on, obliged me to take shelter at the turnpike, where I had not been five minutes before the curate entered with his little family. He was returning from his evening duty, and the serenity of his countenance bespoke the conscious satisfaction of having devoted a day to virtue, peace, and the service of his fellow-creatures!

I dreaded the idea of his speaking to me; the more so, as I observed my friend David, every now-and-then, pulling his father's gown, and whispering—"That's the gentleman, father; that's the gentleman." A number of rustics had, by
this

this time, thronged into the turnpike-house. I hoped, among them, to escape unnoticed; and, by degrees, got nearer to the door, for that purpose.

The storm abated, and the many-coloured bow of heaven extended itself over the mountains, reflecting its bright tints on the spangled turf beneath: the sun again darted forth, as if to take its farewell of the beauties of nature, re-animated by the refreshing shower, before it sunk in the glowing confines of the west.

I resolved to visit the recluse again, before I retired to rest: while the curate was engaged in earnest inquiries with the gateman, I escaped amidst the throng, and, without looking back, hastened towards the wood.

The torrents poured from the mountains: the rain had been profuse, and the small rivulets had overflowed so as to render the road, in many places, almost impassable. The rapidity with which these streams had descended converted them into a white foam, which ran bubbling

bling towards the lake, formed by the never-silent cataract. When I entered the wood, the thick-woven branches sprinkled a second shower, falling in countless glittering drops, whenever the evening breezes ruffled their leaves.

The freshness of the air was exhilarating! the sweetness of the wild thyme, which grew in tufts, luxuriantly rich, in colour and in perfume; the notes of the nightingale, harmonized by the murmurs of the wood-pigeon; the sound of the village bells, swelling and falling, as the gale bore along their vibration; the lofty spire, catching the last beams of the sun, and the mists beginning to envelope the distant peaks, presented a scene that would have done honour to the fancy of a Claude de Lorraine, and would scarcely have received additional splendour from the pencil of a Salvator Rosa!

I now beheld the object of my daily thoughts and nightly meditations. She was sitting at the door, which was overhung with jessamin, and was studiously employed in reading, with an audible voice.

voice. I concealed myself behind part of the ruin: her whole soul seemed occupied with the subject she had chosen, which was honourable to her taste, and congenial to her feelings. It was the minstrel of the inspired Beattie! The exquisite beauties of this poem were augmented, if possible, by the sweet impressive tones of the amiable recluse. I heard her read the following stanza:

- “ Let vanity adorn the marble tomb
“ With trophies, rhymes, and scutcheons of renown,
“ In the deep dungeon of some Gothic dome,
“ Where night and desolation ever frown;
“ Mine be the breezy hill that skirts the down,
“ Where a green grassy turf is all I crave,
“ With here and there a violet bestrown,
“ Fast by a brook or fountain’s murmuring wave,
“ And many an evening sun shine sweetly on my
“ grave.”

At the conclusion of the last line she laid her arm on the back of the bench, and with her forehead resting upon her hand, remained, for some minutes, in profound meditation.

I ap-

I approached gently: she started, at seeing me, and rose from her seat. I bowed with veneration. She was all grace, beauty, and gentleness! She was silent, but the enlightened soul beamed in her large eyes; they were rendered powerful by their softness, and captivating by that solemn sensibility which seemed the effect of deep and melancholy musing.

She was drest in white muslin; a narrow black zone served to fasten the drape, which gave her the appearance of a Grecian statue: her head was unadorned, except by nature, which had bestowed a profusion of dark auburn hair, that waved about her shoulders, and partly shaded her white forehead; her eye-brows were nearly black; her eyes of the deepest blue; her nose beautifully formed; her cheek—O grief! what a banquet hadst thou there! It had lost the bloom of youth, of health, of sweet repose! She endeavoured to smile when I approached her. She could not: long

ac-

accustomed to mournful sufferance, she had forgot the very semblance of delight. Is it possible that any being, blessed with reason, sentiment, or humanity, could destroy the peace of such an angel? Hold; I did not recollect that I was writing to Lord Acreland.

Her's was not the morning of juvenile lustre! She must have been more strikingly brilliant, more wonderfully lovely! But she never could have appeared so interesting as she did at the moment in which I describe her! She displayed not the freshness of the rose, but she convinced me that twice eighteen summers can mature a myrtle, sweet to the sense and decorated with that sober grace which can rival the most animated tints of the gaudiest flower! She is a gem formed by the bewitching hand of nature; not glowing with the dazzling rays of the brilliant, but mildly graced, as the more modest pearl, intrinsically rare, and elegantly unassuming!

Again I endeavoured to speak to her; and again my tongue was chained in mute admiration! She perceived my embarrassment, and broke the silence by requesting to be informed if I had any particular business to communicate?

"Alas! Sir," said she, "I did not think that I should be discovered in this solitary dwelling. If your motive proceeded from curiosity, I lament your disappointment; here is nothing to gratify a feeling observer: in the heart that is hardened against the miseries of its fellow creatures, this scene may excite astonishment no more!"

"Heavens! madam:" answered I. "Is it possible that you can suspect me of idle curiosity? Believe me, I am incapable of giving pain to such a mind as your's. I can pity your sorrows, and, I trust, alleviate them. Will you allow me to ask you a single question? and will you reply to it with candour?"

She fixed her eyes on mine, and seemed to read my thoughts. "You do not an-
swer

swer me, madam ;” continued I. “ This conversation seems to distress you, and I will readily conclude it.”

“ I am all attention ;” replied she, gently inclining her head, and smiling with the most engaging complacency.

“ Then, madam,” continued I, “ are you acquainted with the name of——”

I could not proceed. She trembled, and looked pale. Could I inflict a pang on a bosom already so deeply wounded ?

“ Why do you hesitate ?” said she.

“ You alarm me ! For Heaven’s sake be explicit.”

“ You have, madam,” answered I, “ a portrait in your possession ; will you suffer me to see it ?”

Her agitation increased.

“ Sir,” said she, hesitating, “ it is true, I have a portrait : it has been painted many years. It once bore the strong resemblance of a beloved friend :—but he is gone ! He changed so much before I lost him, that the likeness was no longer visible.”

She turned from me; her distress was evident: I would have given all the trash that fortune has bestowed on me, to have recalled a question which seemed to penetrate her heart!

"Pardon me; I conjure you, madam, pardon me," said I, "for this barbarous intrusion. I condemn myself sufficiently; do not reproach me."

"Reproach, Sir;" answered she, with calm and unaffected dignity; "reproach does not belong to my nature. I can resent, I can reflect, I can pity—I can forgive; but I cannot stoop to the meanness of reproach! That pride which sustains my deeply lacerated heart; which guides my thoughts through all the varying miseries of silent suffering, alone prompted me to seek this solitude."

I knew not how to reply. I had nothing to communicate that could heal her wounded bosom, and I was not capable of augmenting her afflictions. I made an awkward apology; and was preparing to leave her.

"Stay,

“Stay, Sir,” said she, earnestly; “you have awakened my curiosity; you have alarmed my mind with a thousand painful apprehensions! If you knew the person whose portrait is in my possession, I conjure you to name him. I do not dread to hear a name which I once loved, and shall never cease to remember. Perhaps you are mistaken, or misinformed: I am zealous, in either case, to undeceive you.”

“The sight of the portrait, which I am told you preserve with the tenderest regret, will elucidate a mystery of some importance;” said I. “This is not the effect of an impertinent or inquisitive forwardness. I am interested in the request more deeply than you can imagine; your happiness is nearly connected with the subject, and I conjure, I intreat you to gratify my wish.”

“That you are acquainted with my story,” said she, “is evident; your caution cannot conceal the consternation of your mind; I now, in my turn, solicit you to inform me, what is your motive for this unexpected visit? The cause of

my long sufferings and seclusion is, alas! no more! Spare me the recital of that mournful event! I know it, I lament it!" A torrent of tears bore witness of her sorrow.

"His death," continued Mrs. Sydenham, "for many months deprived me of reason; in that most forlorn condition to which human nature can be reduced, I was obliged to leave the asylum he afforded me:—I was driven to wander over the wide world without a friend to comfort me! My father's doors were for ever closed against me. I might, indeed, have made my peace with him; could I have broken a solemn oath which I had taken, and which I will abide by till I expire. Had he lived, on whom my heart doated, perhaps, before this time, the secret would have been divulged. But when he fell, I had neither ambition to gratify, nor hope to cherish! There was no prospect remaining for me, but the grave, and I determined to make my path towards it, retired, if not tranquil. Even amidst these dark and dreary solitudes, memory presents

his

his image !” She was again interrupted by her tears.

“Not for the possession of millions would I witness such another scene.”

“I grieve,” said she, “not only that it pleased Heaven to snatch from me my only friend, but that the fatal event took place in so remote a part of Europe. Had he expired in Britain, I might still have experienced the mournful gratification of visiting his grave ! of weeping over his ashes ! of dedicating the remainder of my days to the task of fond, though unavailing regret !”

“I request,” continued she, “that you will conceal my real name, if you should ever mention me in this part of the world. Here I am only known by that of Arundal. My reason for this deception originated in the hope of eluding all inquiries after me. So far, thank Heaven ! I have succeeded. The honest inhabitants of the neighbouring villages consider me as a forlorn maniac : I have never sought to undeceive them. The terror excited by my supposed state of derangement prevents my receiv-

ing unwelcome visitors. I have one friend! one kind, generous, and feeling friend! To him I am indebted for this asylum:—nay, even for my life! Alas! but for him, I might have perished!”

“Perished!” exclaimed I. “Gracious God! is it possible that so much goodness, such meek, such unoffending worth, could be exposed to the danger you describe? Where then was the justice of Heaven!”

“Hold, Sir,” said she, with awful submission. “Do not arraign the justice of Heaven! I deserve some punishment for the thorns I planted in the breast of a fond father! But I have not courage to speak of that event. I meant to have deprecated his anger: Fate interposed, and my destiny was sealed;—I fear, irrevocably.”

“Let me know the name of the friend you mentioned to have found in this solitude.”

“Lloyd,” answered she.

“By Heaven! I thought so!” exclaimed I. “He is worthy of my esteem; I shall henceforth consider him as a brother!”

“Oh! ’twas a dreadful moment!” continued

tinued she; "The elements conspired against me; all the ills of life at once assailed my defenceless bosom!"

I intreated her to compose her mind, and to relinquish so painful a subject. During a few minutes she was silent; at last, she endeavoured to smile, and converse on various topics; but her placidity was assumed, for her words were unconnected, and, at times, she started as if apprehensive of some approaching danger.

Night advanced rapidly; I promised to visit her again on the following day, and returned to the village. Her spirits were exhausted, and she had scarcely the power to request a farther explanation of my conduct. What shall I say to her? How shall I account for my visit? She believes that you are dead! Oh! my friend, if you have not placed the shield of avarice before your heart, to guard it against the pleadings of affliction, do not delay a moment, but hasten hither, and undeceive her.

Your's,

GEORGE FAIRFORD.

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LETTER

LETTER XVIII.

Miss CLARENDON to Mrs. HORTON.

Clarendon Abbey.

IT is near a week since I received any intelligence of Mr. Belmont. Poor Sir Philip, and Lady Watkins, are almost frantic. My father attributes Charles's absence entirely to me, and my sufferings are augmented by the unceasing reproaches of the whole family. Could they form the slightest idea of my agonizing reflections, they would, in pity, spare me the misery of encountering their's. But, alas! we seldom feel for the pang we inflict on the heart of sensibility, though we are restless and impatient while labouring under the smallest restraint in the pursuit of selfish gratifications. Sir Philip esteems Charles Belmont: I adore him! Which is most the object of commiseration? Lord Acreland is become more hateful to me than ever. Every scene that hitherto presented a shadow of consolation, is now be-

come vapid and insupportable. Illusion fails to divert my fancy; and hope no longer presents her dreams, to soothe my bewildered imagination. My nights are prolonged with horrors, and my days are wasted in unavailing sorrow.

On the morning after Mr. Belmont's departure, as soon as I quitted my chamber, I hastened to my beloved hermitage. The surrounding scenery appeared to wear a melancholy aspect, the trees looked less verdant, the rivulets seemed to murmur in mournful sounds, the sky was cloudy, the wind moaned through the dark wood, and the dew that hung upon the flowers oppressed them with its burthen, at least I thought so; and what has not imagination, troubled like mine, the power to present? Such is—

THE PROGRESS OF MELANCHOLY.

BY flow progressive steps the poison fell,
 Creeps through the sick'ning brain; the pallid cheek,
 The languid down-cast eye, the listless frame,
 The desolating toil of ceaseless thought,
 Proclaim the mental malady at hand!
 Absorb'd amidst surrounding revelry,

The child of ruthless MELANCHOLY steals;
 Unheeding the loud laugh, the wanton jest,
 The sign mysterious, or the whisper low
 Of shrewd, sharp-sighted, prying observation.
 Nor magic charm, nor herb medicinal,
 Nor all the treasur'd lore of studious skill,
 Can draw the victim from the numbing spell
 That fascinates and chains her yielding soul!

Seldom she speaks: if question'd, she returns
 The answer incoherent and unapt;
 Mark'd by the frequent pause and vacant eye.
 Sometimes she weeps; but nature's niggard hand
 Denies the copious show'r; sweet balmy fount,
 That cools and vivifies the burning brain!
 And now she starts! and now-and-then, by fits,
 She looks aghast, trembles, and deeply sighs;
 Then sinks into the torpid dream again.

She loaths the blooms of spring! the glowing hour
 Of feast and minstrelsy, and playful mirth!
 Her mind, each active faculty possess'd,
 Relinquish'd itself to ever-musing woe:
 For her no orient beam adorns the sky;
 No balmy wing ethereal, through the shade
 Flings the refreshing breeze; no limpid brook
 Sparkles with noon-tide rays, reflected back
 With ten-fold lustre from its glassy breast!
 The change of season, and the varying hour,
 Serve to make up the dull account of time,
 But bring no interval of gleaming joy!

Or,

Or, if her sense can ought discriminate,
 She lingers on the miseries of life;
 The barren mountain, where the tott'ring hut
 Rocks as the whirlwind sweeps its rufhy roof,
 And hurls it fathoms down the shaggy steep!
 The chamber, where the paly quiv'ring lamp
 Shews the worn fuff'rer on the bed of death.
 For her the woodland nightingale attunes
 His fong nocturnal, unregarded—loft!
 The fad, the fymphathetic, plaintive ftrain,
 O'er the dull ear of forrow paffes faint,
 If not unheeded; or, if feeling wakes,
 Recall'd by memory to long paff woe,
 Reflection glances o'er the page of time,
 And marks its progress, with a filent tear!

Pale MELANCHOLY fhuns the rural haunt,
 Where peace, and joy, and revelry prefide!
 Blifs-breathing Health, that welcomes young defire,
 Led on by fmiling hope and blooming love,
 Starts from her with'ring form, and fleals away;
 While apathy, with petrifying hand,
 Throws a dim fhadow o'er each faded charm.

The twilight gloom amidft embow'ring woods
 She courts, and bending o'er fome wizzard fream
 That winds among the ever-mould'ring heaps,
 Strew'd by the touch of time from antique tow'rs
 And arches fretted with fantaftic forms,
 She fits, the pensive genius of the fcene!
 Around her cell attentive Stillnefs reigns;

The

The breezes sleep; and o'er its pebbly bed
 The shallow river bends its silent way;
 Death seems to triumph o'er the breathing world,
 Save where the bat from the dark ruin flits,
 Cleaving the night-mist with his dusky wing.

Nor there alone presides the mournful maid;
 She loves to stray, and ponder as she strays,
 Along the dreary monumental pile;
 Where, from the Gothic roof, with ivy bound,
 The whistling wind descends, and through the aisle
 Sweeps the long hoarded dust for ages heap'd
 On the vain records of the sainted dead!
 Where the loath'd insect weaves its wily web,
 And spits foul venom on the sceptred hand,
 Mocking the pride and pageantry of kings.

Oft, when the wint'ry moon o'ertops the hills,
 In circling vapour wrapp'd, she wanders forth
 O'er the bleak heath; list'ning the rising gale,
 Or distant village bell, whose sound, once told,
 Proclaims the witching hour. Then Fancy comes;
 But in her train no lovely forms appear,
 No blithesome groups, thridding the roseate wreath,
 Or tripping in fantastic measures by;
 No Sylvan pipe, no rude, yet dulcet note
 Of mountain minstrelsy delights her ear;
 But the shrill menace of the freezing blast,
 (Thron'd on whose black and desolating wing
 Disease and death hurl the destructive shaft)
 Howls o'er her breast. Still, dauntless, she proceeds;

The

The drizzly dew, the sharp and nipping gale,
 Pass o'er her cheek unheeded. All alone
 She contemplates the solitary scene,
 While horror, madd'ning, conjures up an host
 Of spectres gaunt; of chiefs, whose mould'ring bones
 Have slept beneath the green-sod where they fell,
 Till village legends scarcely say—they died!

Now from their prison graves again they start,
 Hurling the airy jav'lin on the foe;
 And now they rush, in mighty legions, on;
 Now form the length'ning columns fiercely brave;
 And now the broken ranks disorder'd fly,
 Pale as the silv'ry beam that marks their course;
 And now the breathless heaps bestrew the plain,
 While on their mangled limbs the batter'd shield
 Gleams horrible; as thro' th' indented steel
 The life-stream gushes from the recent wound!
 The groan of death fills up the dreadful pause;
 Sad, and more sad, it echoes o'er the scene,
 Till, oft repeated, the deep murmur dies!
 The cherish'd poison, now more potent grown,
 Riots o'er all the faculties at will;
 Strong in conceit, with fascination fraught,
 Painfully pleasing. As the fever burns
 The consciousness of misery recedes;
 Till fill'd with horror, reason's barrier fails,
 And frenzy triumphs o'er th' infected brain!

Now the wan maniac hurries to the bourn
 Whose sandy base the frequent surges lave;
 Dishevell'd!

Dishevell'd! wild! and fearless of the storm!
 There, o'er the dreadful summit she inclines,
 While darkness wraps the liquid world below:
 She listens, with attention mute, to catch
 The mournful murmurs of the distant main;
 The tempest wakes; the rouz'd and angry waves
 Rise in the mighty elemental strife,
 To lash the howling blast, whose forceful breath
 Repels them, foaming, to their native deep.
 Amidst the din terrific, the doom'd bark
 Strikes on the rocky shore. The wretched crew
 Fill the dread chorus with the groans of death,
 Till the tir'd winds moan o'er the shatter'd wreck,
 That sinks amidst the fathomless abyss!

Rouz'd from her dream, pale MELANCHOLY starts;
 Shrieks louder than the blast! but shrieks unheard;
 Then plunges headlong from the dizzy steep,
 And, in the bosom of Despair, expires!

Now the faint dawn gleams o'er the eastern cliff;
 The smooth sea brightens with the coming ray,
 And not a vestige of the storm is seen!

My pen has led me from my beloved
 hermitage to the regions of poetical fan-
 cy: there all is illusion; but the scene I
 have quitted, my sad heart confesses, is
 replete with real, not imaginary sorrows;
 yet I must return to it;—so fascinating is
 that

that melancholy which I have attempted to describe; so completely is my mind subdued by its influence.

On passing the threshold of the hermitage, I felt a strange presentiment that I should see Mr. Belmont no more. I looked round with tender recollection of all that had passed on the preceding evening; the pillow on the straw couch still remained indented by the pressure of his head: my heart was bursting with regret, and I could, at that instant, have resigned my existence with the composure of a martyr;—yes, I repeat it, of a martyr; for what else shall I be, at the moment when I yield my hand to Lord Acreland?

'Tis misery to reflect; yet, if I suffer apathy to benumb my reason, I shall be inevitably lost; while I am only dreaming of sorrow, I may be dragged to the altar: there I shall awake to the certainty of despair.

On approaching the window, I observed Lord Acreland just entering the wood, alone, and walking hastily. The
idea

idea of meeting him was terrible; I therefore made my escape, before he could possibly reach the hermitage; and running swiftly down the winding path, on the opposite side of the hill, arrived at the grotto, without his observing me. I there sat down to recover myself; for the perturbation, fear, and speed with which I had flown, had quite exhausted my strength, at no time powerful, and lately much enfeebled, by the anxiety and want of rest which I have experienced. Thus driven from place to place, afflicted, persecuted, and overwhelmed with agonizing conflicts, I could not restrain my tears—they flowed spontaneously—they relieved my heart, and the first effusion of grief was shortly succeeded by mournful and silent sorrow. Deeply absorbed in thought, I remained almost insensible of my situation—when I was a second time alarmed by the sound of approaching footsteps. I rose from my seat—I listened—I trembled; but my fears subsided, when I beheld my good aunt Juliana.—My eyes were still humid with tears; my

my heart still throbbed with affliction.— She perceived my agitation, and, taking my hand with the most tender sympathy, requested me to allow her a few moments conversation. The gentleness of her voice and manner consoled me; and we took our seat in a niche in one corner of the grotto. The situation seemed congenial to friendship; no sound interrupted the confidential voice of esteem, except the soft murmuring of a rivulet, which, winding among the spar, here and there, caught the rays of the sun, darting through small chasms in the roof, and, by columns of brilliant light, rendering the other parts of the grotto more gloomy, yet more serenely inviting.

“Sophia,” said my aunt, “I have been in search of you, and am delighted in having an opportunity of conversing with you alone. You seem dejected and unhappy: tell me, my dear child, what is it that afflicts you? Is it the austerity of your father’s manners—your approaching marriage with Lord Acreland—or your partiality for Charles Belmont?”—

I started,

I started, and my face glowed with confusion.

"My partiality for Mr. Belmont!" repeated I; "for Heaven's sake, my dear madam, what is Mr. Belmont to me? May I not be permitted to admire an amiable object, without being supposed to entertain more serious sentiments? Why do you suppose I am unhappy on Mr. Belmont's account?"

"I did not accuse you," said my aunt, "but the tongue never fails to interpret for the heart that overflows with tenderness: the very caution we use to conceal our dearest affections, only serves to betray us. I have not travelled through fifty years without making some observations; and, if I can read the human heart at all, I think, that of a young unpractised girl is no very difficult study. I am convinced that you love Charles Belmont; I do not wonder at it; we all adore him; and I know that Sir Philip and Lady Watkins would have readily consented to your union, had not your father's absurd ambition

tion pointed to an alliance of an higher order."

"An higher order!" exclaimed I, with emotion; "what are the real distinctions in society but those of genius and virtue? Who has more exalted claims than Mr. Belmont?"

"I acknowledge all you would wish to insinuate upon that subject," replied my aunt; "Mr. Belmont has every right to the most unbounded admiration; yet remember the maxim of Rochefaucault, 'the world oftner rewards the appearance of merit, than merit itself.' With more art, and less genius, Mr. Belmont might take place of half the trifling coxcombs he will meet with in society; were my single opinion only requisite to confirm your choice, I should not hesitate a moment to declare in his favour." I kissed her hand—my gratitude was unspeakable.

"What can be done?" continued my amiable aunt; "I am your friend, and will make every effort to promote your happiness, if it can be augmented without dishonouring your family: I will open my
mind

mind to Sir Edward; for, believe me, if you abhor Lord Acreland, and have fixed your affections on our beloved Charles, I will not be present at a ceremony where your best hopes will be sacrificed, to gratify the base and degrading pride of a man who is destitute of reason and humanity. Take my advice, be candid and explicit with Lord Acreland; tell him you cannot make him happy."

At this moment Lord Acreland entered the grotto. His mortification was not to be concealed by the forced smile which accompanied his pretended pleasure at finding us. To me he was no more than commonly civil; but his affected bow, as he approached my aunt, bespoke every thing that was malicious and sarcastic. She observed and felt his meaning. He enjoyed her confusion; and, to complete his triumph, declared, that he "should have thought so solitary a retreat but ill-suited to a youthful imagination, had he not found it in the society of wisdom and experience. With such a monitress as Miss Pengwynn, even a cloister would seem

seem an Elysium," said Lord Acreland. A pause ensued.

"Our ages are ill-suited, my Lord, but our minds are congenial," replied my aunt. And again a perfect silence followed.

"The purest minds may be perverted by peevish and repining spirits;" said Lord Acreland. "The doctrines of antediluvian maxims will warp even the most polished opinions:—the nonsense about congeniality of soul is quite exploded, and every wise or reasonable being now thinks for himself only;—let each individual take care of his own peace of mind, and the world will be worth enjoying—bad as it is." My aunt made no reply; her manner evinced her silent contempt: she took my arm, we quitted the grotto, and strolled to the top of the shrubbery, where we met Sir Philip and Lady Watkins, who, with my father, were hastening towards us.

"This is as it should be!" exclaimed Sir Edward, "why you look as though you were married already."

"God

“God forbid!” said my aunt; “for the only emblems of modern matrimony are folly and decorum, each struggling for pre-eminence. The latter is, I trust, the companion of my niece upon all occasions; whether or not she is capable of stooping to the former, a few days will evince.”

“Come, come, Juley,” said Sir Edward, “you must not be captious.—Though I can make allowances for an old maid’s mortification at seeing a young one’s good fortune: this courting business makes you regret lost time—doesn’t it? But never despair; your happy day may come yet; and, in the mean time, you have chastity to console you.”

“If its power be equal to its scarcity,” replied my aunt, “it will not fail to work miracles; and, Heaven knows, the wretch who is condemned to endure your society, has need of consolation. Yet, give me leave to tell you, Sir Edward, I never will marry a man who is not the object of my choice.”

“That’s good enough!” exclaimed my father; “a virgin of fifty pretends to talk
of

of picking and choofing ! Take what you can get, Juley ; goods that have been long on hand can't expect the first market ; time is apt to damage, and fashions vary ; you are like a bale of cotton, as one may say, grown yellow by keeping, and moth-eaten by ill-nature. 'Follow Sophy's example, and take the first offer ; a dose of matrimony is the best remedy to cure the spleen, as one may say : why, you ought to have seen your children's children by this time ;—a young grandmother is, at any rate, better than an old maid."

"I shall never ask your advice, brother," replied my aunt ; "therefore, I desire you to spare me the trouble of hearing it.—Thank Heaven ! I am my own mistress, and above the necessity of bearing your ill-manners : your daughter's good sense and accomplishments are the only attractions to be found at Clarendon Abbey."

"That happens to be your mistake," interrupted Sir Edward, "there are attractions of a very different nature. A good house, good cheer, good wine, and,

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in short, every thing that's good ! What say you, my Lord ?”

“ The hospitalities of Clarendon Abbey are too well known to require my panegyric ;” replied Lord Acreland, with a supercilious sneer.

“ I told you so,” said Sir Edward ; “ and I believe if his Lordship speaks the truth, he will confess, that the most useless piece of lumber on the whole estate, is a troublesome old virgin ; whose wit is worn out in ridiculing her own sex, and whose charms are faded in the vain attempt to captivate our’s.”

My good aunt was visibly mortified by this last severe remark : she played with her fan, bit her lip, settled her elbows, nodded her head, and discovered all the symptoms of resentment and indignation. Lord Acreland’s countenance proclaimed his secret triumph. Sir Edward watched the emotions of uneasiness which he had excited with evident satisfaction.

“ That was a hard knock, my Lord ;” said Sir Edward.

“ Be

“ Be merciful, be merciful, my good friend,” replied Lord Acreland; “ you should not seek to vanquish the gentle sex : besides, the respect due to age should not be violated.”

“ No man hates quarrelling so much as I do, my Lord ;” said Sir Edward : “ but flesh and blood can’t bear such provocation. Why Juley is quite scouted in the City ; no body can speak when she is of the party, but she begins canting about the ancients, and such fabulous stuff.— She wants nothing but a plaid gown, and green velvet cap, to be as good an old schoolmaster as the best of ’em.”

“ I shall not condescend to animadvert on your brutality ;” replied my aunt : “ the coarseness of your manners is proverbial among people of your own class ; though you never have had an opportunity of blazoning them in more enlightened societies. That you should act indecorously towards me is not surprising, when you do not even consult the delicacy of a daughter’s feelings. My wit may be worn out, as you elegantly express

it ; but I have yet a small remnant left, to adorn your portrait : as for my charms, if they are faded, 'tis not with grief and oppression. My father was no tyrant ; he never sacrificed a daughter to gratify his ambition : for, Heaven knows, that you was a beggar when my sister married you."

" That's a hit for you, my Lord ;" said Sir Edward ; " but never mind a foolish old woman : Sophy knows what's what, and is proud of being honoured with your Lordship's notice." Lord Acreland bowed, and abruptly leaving us, proceeded towards the abbey : I was ready to die with confusion. Sir Philip and Lady Watkins, who had just overtaken us, now joined in the conversation.

" As to the honour, brother," said Lady Watkins, " I cannot coincide with you in opinion. My niece is a match for any man in the kingdom ; and it is not always certain, that the highest rank insures the most perfect felicity."

" True," added Sir Philip ; " my little Sophy is a gem, fit for the cabinet of an emperor ! She deserves to be happy ; and,

to

to tell you the truth, Sir Edward, I meant to have asked your consent for her to marry Charles Belmont, if she had not been engaged to Lord Acreland." I pressed the arm of my good aunt Juliana:—encouraged by this signal of confidence, she seconded Sir Philip.—"That would have been a proper alliance; she would have been happy with a companion of her own age; a friend of her own way of thinking; a husband of her own choice."

"And pray what right has she to choose?" said my father.

"The right that humanity allows, and none but brutes would deny her:" replied my aunt. "Charles Belmont is rich in every good quality; and if he has not the heraldry of nobility, he has the lustre of virtue, that will at any time over-balance adventitious claims."

Sir Edward now lost all patience. "Why, what a pack of low-minded skulking relations am I cursed with!" exclaimed he. "Give my daughter to a beggarly orphan, brought up upon charity! A mis-begotten, ill conditioned, pitiful,

tiful, sneaking, mountain renegado! A fellow who has not a brass farthing that he can call his own;—as poor as a church mouse, and, at the same time, as proud as Lucifer!”

“You are no judge of merit, brother;” said my aunt: “you worship nothing but Mammon.”

“Was *he* king of Athens too?” cried Sir Edward, lowering his voice, and looking contemptuously at my aunt: “I don’t care a pinch of snuff for a score of ’em.”

“Brother, brother,” replied my aunt, “don’t talk treason! remember the respect due to exalted characters; they are like so many luminaries in this labyrinth of vexation! They dance before our eyes; and we follow them, as the lesser planets move round the sun.”

“Yes; and who pays the piper?” replied Sir Edward. “If I must dance, let it be to my own tune, at least: I’ve no notion of paying the fiddlers for other people’s sport.”

“Nobody suspects you of making such a sacrifice;” answered my aunt: “your treatment

treatment of Mr. Belmont is a proof of your selfish nature;—his merit has little to hope from your generosity.”

“ He shall never stand in need of it ;” said Sir Philip. “ I only wish I could once see him married to Sophy, and I would take care of his happiness afterwards.”

“ I wonder at your offering me such an insult !” replied Sir Edward. “ Married to Charles Belmont ! why, I thought I did him honour enough when I received him into my counting-house.”

“ A great honour, truly ;” said my aunt Juliana : “ there is only one house he is fit for, after having degraded himself by becoming a dependant on such an illiterate savage—and that’s Bedlam.”

“ You deserve the house of correction, old Miss,” replied Sir Edward, “ and I should like to make you do penance there till you got rid of your crabbed humours ; why, who the devil is to put up with your whimsies ?”

Lord Acreland now met us near the portico ; I endeavoured, but in vain, to

change the conversation. "Pray, my dear aunt," said I, in a whisper, "let this controversy subside; you know my father's violent temper, and how dangerous it is to irritate him when he is out of humour."

"Yes, yes, my dear;" answered my aunt; "I know his temper too well; all the world knows it." I trembled at her incautious mode of betraying what I had said. Fortunately Sir Edward was speaking to Lord Acreland, and did not attend to her remark. "But," continued my aunt, "he is not worthy of my notice: women of letters only degrade themselves by contending with idiots and slanderers."

"The cap doesn't fit! the picture isn't like!" exclaimed Sir Edward; "no, not a single feature; damn me if you can paint any face but your own."

"Never will I attempt to draw your portrait, believe me;" replied my aunt: "I remember the fate of Spinello!"

"Who the devil was she?" cried Sir Edward; "a fusty old maid, or a Roman empress?"

"If

“ If I mistake not,” said Lord Acreland, “ Spinello was a Tuscan painter of some eminence?”

“ The same, my Lord ;” answered my good aunt. “ He painted Lucifer, and found the portrait so horrible, that he lost his senses in contemplating his own work !”

“ Confound your impudence !” exclaimed Sir Edward, reddening with anger, and stopping short at the steps of the portico. “ I’ll tell ye what, Miss Pengwynn, if you don’t pack up your alls, and fly off, like a tangent, I’ll make you remember Clarendon Abbey, as long as you’ve a head upon your shoulders.” This severe expression was accompanied by a menacing gesture that shocked me beyond description. My poor aunt could scarcely govern her rage and resentment ; her spirit lessened my distress, for, I am certain, that had she shed one tear, I should have fainted.

We passed along the saloon, my aunt fanning herself vehemently. “ I shall leave the abbey,” addressing herself to my father,

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“ don’t

“ don't alarm yourself, I shall leave the abbey to night ; and you may depend upon my explaining all I know on my arrival in London.”

“ A good riddance !” said Sir Edward, “ the sooner your back is turned the better ; nobody will miss you except the cat and Sophy.”

Sir Philip interposed ; Lady Watkins shed tears ; I pressed her hand, not daring to utter a syllable ; Lord Acreland observed a contemptuous silence, and Sir Edward laughed immoderately. I attended my aunt to her chamber ; I intreated her, for my sake, to stay ; all my solicitations proved fruitless.

The chaise was at the portico in a few minutes. My dear aunt descended the steps, her excellent heart was overflowing with grief ; she could only utter, “ farewell, my poor Sophy,” and instantly stepped into the carriage. The postillion drove off ; Sir Edward saluted my good aunt with a war-whoop from the window of the library. My affliction could only be equalled by my shame, when I reflected
on

on the conduct of my father, who had rendered himself and his family contemptible in the opinion of Lord Acreland—of the detested Lord Acreland!

I earnestly intreated my aunt to make every inquiry after Mr. Belmont. Alas! Louisa! I fear the die is cast, and I am destined to misery! We are born to honour, to love the authors of our being; but does duty require the sacrifice of all that renders that being supportable, when there is nothing to plead but an insatiable ambition? Heaven knows I would readily yield up my last sigh to save that father's existence, who, without remorse, can bend me to a sepulchre.

I wait for your letters: why, why are you silent? Sir Philip and Lady Watkins will set out for Caermarthenshire in three weeks. Oh! Louisa! I had rather be the inmate of a cottage in the neighbourhood of Kidwelly, than the mistress of a palace in the metropolis of Britain.

Adieu,

SOPHIA CLARENDON.

LETTER XIX.

*The Rev. Mr. JONES to CHARLES BEL-
MONT.*

Caermarthenshire.

SO soon forgotten! Can two short months in the gay and busy world, obliterate the impressions of seventeen years of affection, labour, and solicitude? In the formation of your opening mind, my dear Charles, I do not recollect to have inculcated any precept that could tend to deaden your humanity; neither has my example authorised you to abjure the memory of friendship, or the duties we owe to society.

You are no stranger to the warmth of my affection; as a father I have been watchful for your safety; as a tutor I have toiled for your mental cultivation. I revered your virtues, I admired your understanding! It expanded like the meek blossoms of the unfrequented valley; it will

will tower like the cedar on the summit of the mountain !

I am declining into the grave ; my race is nearly over, and I approach the gaol where the just will be rewarded ! It would have been some consolation to me had it been your lot to close the eyes of your earliest friend, and truest counsellor :—but, alas ! you are torn from the humble abode of peace, and are launched on a tempestuous sea of troubles, with no pilot but your own honour. Your interest, and the commands of your patron, required that you should emancipate from the trammels of scholastic labour, and the obscurity in which you have been cherished to manhood :—these were necessary grievances—the gay perspective of honour and prosperity dazzled my eyes, and absorbed the tears of regret which our separation excited. Yet I did not believe that the young ivy would entirely estrange itself from the decaying oak which had been its prop, its shelter, and its home, without drooping, for a time, in sympathetic sadness.

Charles !

Charles ! I shall never teach myself to forget you ; I shall, while I admire your virtues, lament that the frailty of human nature makes us all apt to receive benefits eagerly, and to requite them with tardiness. I am not offended, I am only grieved ; yet, if you are happy, I will learn to be content.

Poor Morgan is at rest for ever ! He expired ten days since, worn out with age and infirmity ; his good old mate only survived to see him conveyed to his last long home ! They were a guiltless pair ; they stole through the vale of life as the rays of a wintry sun glide over the desert ; they were cheerful, though not brilliant ; they enlivened a scene where all was poor and uncultivated.

They often talked of you with delight ; age is apt to be loquacious, and sometimes tedious. Yet I have listened to their prattle whole hours together, when you have been the subject of their honest eulogium. Praise, that flows spontaneously from disinterested minds, is acceptable and gratifying ; and, I will venture to assert,

that all the glozing admiration your virtues will extort, even from the tongues of envy and self-importance, will be less pleasing to your ear, less soothing to your heart, though dressed with the graces of eloquence, than the simple applause of old Morgan, and his babbling helpmate!

Now, my dear Charles, let me develope a mystery which might have remained for ever unknown, did I not feel bound to reveal it, in justice to departed philanthropy! You are not indebted to Sir Philip Watkins, or to me, for the vital air you breathe; you owe your existence to your lost associate—the venerable Morgan: but, for his pity, you had sunk, an infant, to the grave unknown; perhaps, unlamented: he took you to his bosom, as the shepherd does the tempest-beaten lamb; he warmed you into life, and preserved that life by eighteen months of weary toil: his labours were sustained by HIM who can give strength to the feeble, and hope to the forlorn! It is a long and melancholy story; perhaps curiosity, on a subject so touching,

touching, will awaken your feelings, and extort an answer from you.

Oh! offspring of sorrow! poor traveller through this wilderness of care, little dost thou dream of thy first steps on its precincts! Dark were thy earliest prospects; but the Supreme can illumine the deepest chaos of oblivion. There is nothing mysterious to him that is all mystery! Revere his power! for he preserved thee, even in the abyss of peril!

We shall expect to see Sir Philip and Lady Watkins before the snow covers the mountains. They will be grieved when they hear of poor Morgan's death. The good old man was, before you came to Caermarthenshire, the baronet's gamekeeper; the cottage you loved so well, was built, by my Lady's commands, for the honest pair. Her bounty supported them, and though they had out-lived their strength, they had not survived their gratitude.

Their little dwelling is shut up, and an universal gloom seems to sadden the village;

lage; I never pass by the door without dropping a tear to their memory: they rest in the same grave; I performed the last office of holy respect over their remains; the turf that covers them was the freshest, the greenest that the villagers could find: they secured it from unhallowed molestation by hoops of osier; and I was pleased, on the following Sunday, to see it adorned with flowers that mocked the pomp of monumental marble! yet I have ordered a small tablet to their memory, where their names and their virtues shall—

“ Teach the rustic moralist to die ! ”

The vain and ostentatious may pretend to pity the low-born child of virtue; or may glance over his merit with the cold eye of apathy; but the proudest potentate might envy the tribute which the hand of truth shall transcribe on the humble grave of poor old Morgan.

Adieu, my dear Charles; believe me faithfully,

Your friend and servant,

EVAN JONES.

LETTER

LETTER XX.

Mrs. HORTON to SOPHIA CLARENDON.

Bath.

YOU will relinquish your right to reproach me, when I tell you that I have been so dangerously ill as to leave no hope in the mind of my medical attendants; my poor Horton has been sensibly affected by my sufferings; and though the power of sympathy sometimes lightens the weight of affliction, believe me, I felt my pain rather augmented than decreased, by the agony I occasion in the breast of the most amiable of beings. I know my danger; the languor of my spirits, the feebleness of my frame, too plainly announce the peril of my situation: I only valued life in proportion as my existence contributed to the felicity of him who is dearer to me than all other considerations; and I shall only meet death with a sigh, at the recollection of what he will suffer. It will be a cruel separation;
but

but he has a philosophic mind, and will, I hope, while he does justice to my memory, reconcile himself to an event which cannot be averted.

My heart throbs with pain and indignation while I read the description of your sorrows. Sophia, there is no law, believe me there is none, either divine or human, that can authorise such persecution—such a sacrifice. Your resistance is virtue; your seeming disobedience will preserve your father from future pangs of conscious agony; yourself from the miseries of irreparable disgrace. Heaven will absolve the crime—and every feeling heart will sanction your resolution.

Alas, Sophia! I could unveil a mystery that would freeze the very life-stream of your bosom. I could relate a story at which your soul would shudder! but, by so doing, I should betray the confidence of one who was once most dear to me!—I should violate a solemn oath pledged to the gentlest, the loveliest of women!—When I look back to that scene of tender confidence, when I remember her words,
her

her beauty, her merit, her grief, my heart scarcely palpitates, and my eyes are suffused with tears. Would to God, they could blot out the record of affection which is engraved upon my memory!

If Lord Acreland persists in his inhuman purpose—if Sir Edward continues to be the confederate of his guilt, I will hasten to Clarendon Abbey, in order to try whether the former will have courage sufficient to demand you in my presence. He dares not!—I would tear the mask away that hides the subtle poison, so well contrived for the purpose of destroying. Believe me, Sophia, I should be the first to reprobate an act of filial disobedience, and the last to uphold a child against the authority of a parent—even such a parent as you have ever found in Sir Edward; but I should consider myself as the most atrocious criminal, if I could become an accomplice, and stand by, the tame spectator of such a sacrifice.

I often wish for your society, from a conviction that your conversation and accomplishments would infinitely console

Mr.

Mr. Horton, and divert his mind from the melancholy contemplation of my tedious infirmity : in him you would find a guardian and a friend ; for the honourable feeling mind will ever prove the former to oppressed innocence, and the latter to unmerited affliction. Here your grief would be diverted ; for, even amidst all my sufferings, I sometimes cannot help smiling, when I survey the variety of character, the abundance of absurdity, for which this place has so long been celebrated. Half the society here consists of gossiping old maids, needy adventurers, coxcombs, studying Chesterfield on the verge of eternity, ruined profligates, and title-sick, wealthy widows ; who, while time marks the progress of every hour on their varnished features, talk of conquest with as much effrontery as though they were just entering the gay world, adorned with all the blushing graces of juvenile attraction ! The young and lovely ornaments of society find very formidable rivals in those antiquated husband-hunters ;
they

they grow in every soil, but in these warm regions they bloom with redoubled vigour, like the holly, ever green, and ever prepared to wound all who approach them. A rich widow's arrival here is a matter of as much delight as that of a cargo of turtles to the ear of an epicure, or a consignment of beauty to the fallow sons of Asiatic luxury. She is the subject of universal conversation; her name glares on every subscription list, in every public resort of either the valetudinarian or the fortune-hunter: she exhibits all her eastern paraphernalia at the rooms, and all her store of cosmetics at the theatre. In the morning she is nervous, languid, and interesting; in the evening she becomes the very soul of vivacity. There is no place of amusement which is not infested with this species of breathing merchandize: they envy superior talents, and look upon genius as an interloper in their dull round of vapid enjoyments. In the libraries they are noisy and loquacious; at the pump, splenetic and inquisitive; at

at the theatre, overbearing and obtrusive ; at the rooms it is difficult to say which is their prominent feature ; there the affection of youth is so mingled with the garrulity of age, that the one perpetually counteracts the other. Do not consider this portrait as distorted, or condemn the painter for a too exact copy of the deformed original : believe me, I have but faintly sketched a character which is well known in this resort of pain and pleasure, of dullness and absurdity !

In a few days I shall remove to Bristol, the uncultivated soil of native, but neglected genius ! There shall I, in fancy, wander with the shade of Chatterton, and often drop a tear to the memory of the ill-fated Savage—the former fled from his home, to perish among strangers ; because that home afforded no patron, no kind congenial spirit ! The latter, disgusted with the world, shrunk from the storms of adversity, and retired thither, to die, unseen—*unpitied* ! Ungrateful Britain ! the tears of neglected Genius will

will blot the brightest annals of thy glory,

"Till worlds shall mingle in the wrecks of time!"

Adieu,

LOUISA HORTON.

LETTER XXI.

SOPHIA CLARENDON to Mrs. HORTON.

Clarendon Abbey, Midnight.

NO news of Charles Belmont! What am I to think? How am I to arm my soul with fortitude, to meet all the miseries that tenderness anticipates and reason shudders to encounter. Oh! Belmont! too surely I never shall forget thy virtues! and, remembering them, it is equally certain I never can become the wife of Lord Acreland. I am almost deprived of sense, to know the magnitude of my distresses; but the small portion which remains tells me they are infinite. Why

Why did fate direct the footsteps of Genius and of Virtue to the abode of Avarice and Pride? Why did the lustre of splendid acquirements shed such transient delight on the deep glooms of melancholy and despair? Unhappy Belmont! perhaps the conflict between gratitude and love has overwhelmed his reason, and urged him to a deed of horror! Oh, God! the very idea bewilders my faculties! A being so gifted by nature, so enlightened by education, so generous, so honourable, so perfect! Louisa, if he has fallen a victim, I must not hope to survive him, I had almost said—I will not—Where, where shall I seek repose, if he is devoted to sorrow? How shall I endure the busy turmoil of life, if he sleeps in the grave?—the cold grave! my blood freezes with horror!

My hermitage, my favourite dear retreat, is the daily scene of my unavailing anguish; that rushy pillow, made sacred by his tears, is hourly drenched with mine: his were the tears of passion, mine are those of despair! Whenever I pass

the threshold, I feel chilled, as though I descended into a sepulchre: there every speck of earth seems filled with mysterious enchantment. Memory recalls his voice, his look, his wild disordered mien, his eyes, now beaming with tenderness, now gazing, in fixed and terrifying frenzy! Can I forget him? Oh! rather say, I can relinquish all that ennobles humanity; suppose me capable of every vice that can contaminate the soul; suspect me of deceit, of infamy, but do not think me capable of forgetting Charles Belmont. Perhaps, while I am writing, he languishes on a bed of sickness, in all the misery of disappointed hope! or wanders amongst strangers, unknown, unfriended! Separated from all his earliest friends, his tenderest connections, what will reason suggest to him? That apathy which will teach him to abjure the memory of all past attachments; or, if he remembers them at all, will it not be with indifference? The idea almost annihilates my being!

Sir

Sir Philip and Lady Watkins left the abbey yesterday morning, in search of their beloved Charles. The good old Baronet is almost frantic: his wife droops beneath the pressure of affliction. Inhuman Belmont! what a scene of misery has thy silence occasioned!

Lady Selina Wantworth, the sister of Lord Acreland, has been here for some days past. The most detestable of women! She is a compound of every thing that can tend to augment my affliction: she is arrogant, without merit; sarcastic, without wit; vain, without beauty—and ostentatious, without pity.—Lady Selina, though turned of thirty, owing to a small and not inelegant figure, may pass for some years younger. Her countenance is animated and arch, never without a sneer of contempt, or a smile of ridicule: her eyes are blue, and though not large, extremely expressive; her hair light brown. In the morning she looks pale and languid; but when she has laid on her evening *rouge*, which she does in immoderate quantities, she has an appear-

ance of youth and vivacity which is often mistaken for the most brilliant wit. Her voice is either affectedly drawling, or flippantly shrill, according to her humour, or the subject of conversation. She dresses fantastically, not only in fashion almost grotesque, but in an assemblage of colours that fatigue the eye and disgust the fancy. She only wishes to render herself remarkable wherever she appears, and she succeeds to the fullest extent of her wishes.

She knows every body's business—is acquainted with all the private anecdotes of the higher circles. She seldom spares a friend; and to an enemy she is merciless! She has, for many years, been searching for a matrimonial alliance—numberless have been her admirers; but she is still condemned to the title of spinster. She is an adept at the gaming-table; a coquet by nature, a libertine by education. She talks incessantly, and is never inactive where either vanity or spleen is to be gratified. Sir Edward has been informed that she is considered as the

epi-

epitome of every thing high-bred and attractive. He commends her taste, applauds her virtues, and wonders at her wit, at the very moment that she treats him with little less than undisguised contempt. This vain, this trifling woman, is henceforth to be my model, and my friend; she is to regulate my thoughts, to fancy my dress, to arrange my amusements, and to select my companions—not only my associate in public, but my domestic mistress.

This morning, soon after breakfast, I retired to my dressing-room, intending to dedicate an hour to mournful meditation. In a few minutes I received a message from Lady Selina, desiring my attendance to walk with her. I sent an excuse, and urged indisposition as the cause of declining the invitation. I heard the servant deliver my apology to her as she stood in the balcony beneath my window.

“Tell her she must come,” said Lady Selina; “if she does not, I shall send Sir Edward to fetch her.”

Sir Edward obeyed her commands, and I was soon reprimanded with more than usual severity. "I wonder at you, Miss Clarendon," exclaimed my father; "do you not know that her ladyship is waiting? People of her consequence are not accustomed to refusals: shall I never make you feel a proper degree of respect for rank? Why, one would think you wished to affront your new relations!"

"I am ready to attend you, Sir," answered I; "though I am extremely ill, and had I been at liberty to choose, I should certainly have remained in my dressing-room."

"Nonsense, nonsense," replied Sir Edward; "these megrims should be laughed out of you: 'tis all affectation and stuff. I am not easily cajoled; I know that nothing ails you, and desire that I may hear no more of such trumpery excuses. Come, come, exercise will do you good, and give you an appetite for dinner: we shall stay for you in the wilderness; and I desire you don't presume to make her ladyship wait."

I soon

I soon joined the party, which consisted of Lady Selina, Lord Acreland, and Sir Edward. I was greeted by the former with a malicious smile and a sarcastic compliment, on my good looks, "considering I was so violently indisposed." I returned this instance of kindness with silent contempt, and we proceeded towards the grotto.

"This is my favourite retreat," said Lady Selina; "'tis so deliciously cool and refreshing. Brother, I insist upon having a grotto at Acrelands next summer: it will be enchanting near the sea; the breezes will render it celestial!"

"Miss Clarendon's taste and fancy will, doubtless, suggest something charming," replied Lord Acreland.

"No," answered Lady Selina, with mortified flippancy, "it shall be all my own; nobody but myself shall offer a single idea; I know more about these things than any body. Miss Clarendon must not dispute the wreath of fashion with me, though she may have some claims to the laurel of genius. Mine be

the light and elegant efforts of taste—her's are the more romantic and sentimental occupations of study."

"I shall not attempt to emulate the superior knowledge of your ladyship," said I.

"You are right, child," answered Lady Selina; "it would be too ridiculous, for I am the very oracle of fancy! Didn't I make the whole plan for Lady Phantom's fête champêtre? Doesn't Lady Oker always desire me to design the decorations, when she receives masks? and didn't I cast the characters in the last French play at Twadlingbourg House, though the elegant hostess is the very essence of good taste? You don't know what celebrity I have acquired. But," continued Lady Selina, looking affectedly over her shoulder, at my father, "these sort of things are quite out of your way."

"My daughter has a very genteel way of doing things; too, I assure your ladyship," answered Sir Edward; "and is
noted

noted in the city for looking like a person of fashion."

"O! I dare say Miss Clarendon is extremely admired in the city," replied Lady Selina, laying a particular emphasis on the last word. "I remember her looking vastly pretty at one of the Lord Mayor's balls; when she danced with—Sir—Something—Somebody—the Welch Knight—with the blue and silver waist-coat!—I was really astonished to see her; for I didn't think that any thing so well-mannered was to be found at such a distance from St. James's."

"We have some very smart girls in the city, my lady," said Sir Edward; "and I think they would be still handsomer, if they didn't ape your court manners so much: why one can't step into a shop, to buy a single article of trade in which women are employed, but one sees 'em be-dizened and tricked out with your Turkish caps, and flowing locks, and patches; and paint and things, just, for all the world, as if they were going to the drawing-room; and some of 'em look as bold,

and stare at one with as much assurance, as though they were born to a duchess's coronet."

"You are very pleasant, indeed," said Lady Selina, sneeringly.

"I thank your ladyship," answered Sir Edward; "I endeavour to be as agreeable as I can."

"Then the extent of your power of pleasing is very limited, indeed!" cried Lady Selina.

My father did not much admire this retort; however, he turned it off with a forced smile, and continued—

"I don't pretend to much learning, to be sure, my lady; but if you want to talk about writing and reading, and those things, Sophy is a match for you, I'll warrant."

"Indeed, Sir," said I, "I don't pretend to any competition with Lady Selina."

"The more fool you!" replied Sir Edward. "I'll pit you against any lady in the land, on the score of learning! Why what have I paid for many hundred pounds for,

for, but to make you a model of gentility!"

"I have always been a great admirer of talents!" cried Lady Selina. "Miss Pengwynn gave me some of Miss Clarendon's sonnets; and very pretty they are, for so young a poet."

Sir Edward seemed overwhelmed with confusion. "Excuse me, my lady," said he, after some hesitation; "it must have been a mistake of my sister's: I trust Sophy never made such a fool of herself as to turn poet. She can buy such trumpery as cheap as dirt, now-a-days. Every body can write verses."

"'Tis easy to make rhymes," answered Lady Selina; "but there is a vast difference between the mere jingle of words—and the true inspiration of poetry."

"I think 'tis all alike," answered Sir Edward; "verses are but verses, make the most of 'em; and, for my part, the easier they are to be understood the better I like 'em. We have as good hands at poetry, among our clubs in the city, as you have at the court end of the town;—

we seldom part without some new song or other; for he that makes it, comes in gratis for the day, and a good dinner will always purchase a poetical grace, as one may say."

"Very good, very good!" cried Lady Selina, with an affected titter: "why you have wit as well as riches, I find, in the regions of the east. I rather thought you toiled more in the mysteries of Plutus than in the pages of literature."

"There you have hit it, my lady," replied Sir Edward; "we toil to procure what you fashionable ladies study to squander."

Lady Selina was mute, and disconcerted. She quitted the grotto, speaking in a low voice to Lord Acreland, who, by a significant shrug, seemed to confess the truth of her observation.

We now proceeded towards the Turkish pavilion, near the lake.

"How do you like my tent?" said Sir Edward: "'twas an expensive gew-gaw; and some how I don't relish it, after all—the top looks mean and pitiful. I'm think-

thinking of putting up a leaden Mercury, or some such light, elegant device—what think you, my lady?”

“I don’t think at all about it,” answered Lady Selina, throwing herself upon a sofa; “neither do I care.”

“Suppose,” said Sir Edward, “I put up a bust of Julius Cæsar, or Pompey, or Jupiter, or some other hero of antiquity. One may have that cast in lead, too; and then ’twill bear all weathers.”

“Yes, and probably pass for a head of one of the family,” answered Lady Selina.

I could not suppress a slight inclination of mine, as an acknowledgment for this compliment. Lady Selina affected to smile at the chagrin the occasioned.

“Go, Acreland, and gather me a bouquet,” said she, “I’ll make a *bandeau* for my hat. I want something to amuse me.”

“I am astonished at that,” said my father. “Why sister Juley would sit here half the day, and knit, and make fur-belows, or play on the guitar, or cut watch-

watch-papers, or some such little genteel pastime."

"Very possibly," answered Lady Selina; "it was perfectly consistent with her pursuits and time of life: when I'm an old maid, I'll follow her example."

"You must make haste and begin, then, my lady;" cried Sir Edward: "nothing like making hay while the sun shines. Why, Sophy isn't, by a dozen years, so old as your ladyship; and I believe she's glad to get a husband."

"Indeed you're mistaken, Sir!" said I. "'Tis my opinion that an old maid is a character highly respectable: my aunt Juliana's virtues have confirmed my sentiments on that subject."

"Now you speak of that amiable young female," said Lady Selina, "pray let me ask if she is also gone in pursuit of the Welch Adonis? He must have been perfectly formidable: 'tis well I didn't see him, for I am monstrously apt to fall in love. He should have been my Strephon, and Miss Clarendon should have composed some little tender *canzonetta's*,

netta's, which I would have sung to him from morning till night, to beguile the melancholy hours. I am told he was quite the sort of creature for a dangler;—very polite, very docile, and very sentimental. Won't he come back? I am really dying to see him. I like the beauties of wild uncultivated nature excessively; and should adore a lover of my own educating."

"The young man you speak of," said Lord Acreland, "was by no means deficient in mental accomplishments; as to his personal qualifications, I do not pretend to be a judge."

"He was a genteel, smart young fellow, to be sure," said my father; "but had he remained with me, he'd have been another guess sort of thing."

"Most likely," answered Lady Selina; "but I am sure he was handsome—Miss Clarendon, I believe, thought him so; and there are no better judges of beauty than novel-reading young ladies: they are so accustomed to heroes of more than human acquirements, that when
they

they allow a mere mortal any share of perfection, he must be a prodigy, indeed!"

"It would be presumption to differ with Miss Clarendon, on so delicate a subject," replied Lord Acreland; "if Mr. Belmont was not the most amiable of men, I believe he was, at least, the most happy. To be the favourite of so accomplished a judge, was sufficient to establish his fame, and to make him an object of universal envy!"

I knew not how to reply. Lady Selina fixed her eyes on mine, and my agitation was evident.

"The young man really had something pleasant about him," continued Lord Acreland, "considering that he was educated in obscurity; but you made too much of him, Sir Edward: familiarity is dangerous to little minds; it is apt to elevate them till they soar beyond the limits of propriety. Mr. Belmont was not deficient in self-love, or unconscious of the partiality he experienced in this family."

Lady

Lady Selina still watched my countenance with indefatigable cruelty.

“For my part,” continued Lord Acreland, “I conversed with him but little; for I am not fond of your Plebeian Platos, your philosophers, who talk more than they read, and who have read much more than they understand.”

“No matter for that,” replied Lady Selina; “I should have liked him of all things! I think it is still possible to discover his retreat. Suppose, by way of a frolic, I put an advertisement in the newspapers, saying, that ‘a young lady, deeply interested in the fate of a gentleman, who lately absented himself from a certain house in Oxfordshire, would be happy to meet him on such a day, having something to communicate of infinite importance to his future welfare.’—I would go to town on purpose: it would be wonderfully comical!—What do you think, Miss Clarendon? Wou’dn’t it be droll?”

“Very droll!” answered I, ready to expire with vexation.

“’Twill

"'Twill be delicious!" continued Lady Selina; "and I shall not rest till I have accomplished my plan."

"You are too eccentric, indeed, Selina," cried Lord Acreland; "but your vivacity is so delightful that I must forgive you.—You have my free consent to laugh at the object of your ridicule, but you shall not commence your pursuit, at least——"

"Till you are married!" interrupted Lady Selina. "Why, what a selfish mortal are you, that you cannot suffer any one to be happy except yourself.—Don't you think he is unreasonable, Miss Clarendon, to refuse me the chance of captivating Mr. Belmont, when he has so perfectly accomplished his own plan of felicity? Contradiction only makes me more impatient: I am determined to lose no time, and will take fifty guineas, to return five hundred, if I am not married to Charles Belmont in less than a month."

"Ridic—" said Lord Acreland, "and I beg
the

“ Ridiculous ! ” said Lord Acreland ;
“ you would not, surely, give your hand
to a man whom you have never seen.”

“ Why not ? ” replied Lady Selina. —

“ Are not our most illustrious marriages
arranged on the same principle ? What !
I suppose you would have me agree to all
the antediluvian forms of a regular court-
ship ! — I am certain I should not only de-
test them, but the lover also, who could
suppose me capable of such folly. There
will be something vastly new and delight-
ful in my scheme ; it will beat Scotland
all to nothing ! — The sooner I depart, the
better. Who knows but I may return in
time to have Miss Clarendon for one of
my bride-maids.”

I leave you to judge of my feelings
during this conversation. Lord Acreland
observed my emotions : he shook his head
reproachfully at Lady Selina ; and, for
the first moment in my life, I thought
him amiable.

“ Come, come, Selina, you have car-
ried this jest beyond the limits of deco-
rum,” said Lord Acreland ; “ and I beg
the

the favour of you to change the conversation; it is not pleasant, and you must drop it."

"My lady is only joking," cried Sir Edward.

"Pray, who told you so?" said Lady Selina, contemptuously; "and what reason have you to doubt my veracity?"

"None, my lady," replied Sir Edward, with some embarrassment; "but I only thought your ladyship's good sense would tell you, that you would judge more fairly by knowledge, than by hearsay. I know that I never buy a bale of goods without first seeing a sample;—and taking a husband, without even knowing who he is, or what he is, would be like buying a pig in a poke, as one may say."

"Horrid idea!" exclaimed Lady Selina; "where, in the name of Chesterfield, have you collected such an uncouth farrago of vulgarities?"

"I don't understand your ladyship," cried Sir Edward; "I despise collections, and scorn to use any man's name but my own."

own. 'Tis a foolish, scandalous insinuation—and may ruin a man's credit for ever. We merchants, my lady, are not like you people of fashion; we have a reputation to support, which, if once lost, can never be retrieved."

"I should be sorry to possess a treasure that required so much looking after," replied Lady Selina.

Sir Edward walked forward, evidently offended at the subject of conversation.—We followed slowly, till we arrived at the hermitage.

"Well! this is really enchanting!" exclaimed Lady Selina, seating herself on the straw couch, and placing the sacred pillow beneath her feet. "This is Elysium!" still trampling on my beloved relic. "Of all the places I have ever seen, this is the most delightful retreat for romantic lovers! This dim light is so soothing, that the heart which could forbear to pity, when implored in such a shrine, must be insensible indeed!—Don't you think so, Miss Clarendon?"

All

All that passed between me and Belmont now rushed across my brain! I had not the power to make a reply. Lady Selina, enjoying my distress, laughed immoderately; and Sir Edward winked, with more than usual meaning. The miserable culprit, waiting to receive sentence for the most atrocious crime, never looked half so wretched as your unfortunate friend did at that moment.

"I hope I have not said any thing *mal-à-propos*," cried Lady Selina. Miss Clarendon seems chagrined: I cannot guess what part of my conversation produced so extraordinary an effect. I declare I am quite shocked at the visible pain I have innocently occasioned, and sincerely repent of my indiscretion, which was wholly involuntary.—Will you forgive me, my dear?" continued Lady Selina, taking my hand with an air of protection; "when you know more of the world, you will learn to laugh at a little harmless raillery."

My confusion increased.

"Well,"

“ Well,” continued she, “ this is the most silly distress I ever witnessed! You cannot be serious, child; you cannot pretend to be mortified at any thing that I have uttered!”

“ Sophy, I’m ashamed of you!” said Sir Edward. “ We had better return to the abbey,” continued my father; “ for I see that Miss Clarendon is determined to expose herself.”

This proposition did not entirely proceed from my visible uneasiness: Sir Edward was as little pleased as myself, at the destruction of the hermit’s pillow, when he beheld it decorated with gravel from the elegant slipper of the accomplished Lady Selina.

“ I am afraid your ladyship finds it rather cool here, after walking in the sun: the clay floor is damp; we had better be moving,” said Sir Edward.

“ O, not at all,” replied Lady Selina; “ this mat will preserve me from the danger of catching cold, ’tis fit for nothing else,”

“ Why,

“Why, to tell you the truth, my Lady,” said Sir Edward, “I always thought it a paltry gim-crack, and grudged the two guineas I paid last summer for the new bed, which, in my opinion, is not worth two farthings. It was one of Miss Clarendon’s whim-whams; she is eternally studying ways to squander money; and when all’s done, her knick-knacks won’t fetch twopence.”

“I perceive,” answered Lady Selina, “what you wish to insinuate. I suppose that I have been guilty of sacrilege in presuming to soil this beautiful cushion!” holding up the beloved pillow with a malicious triumph. “It is really a superb piece of furniture, and deserves a place in the British Museum, as a specimen of the refined taste prevailing in the eighteenth century!”

“I think the furniture perfectly adapted to the place,” said Lord Acreland.

“Ridiculous!” answered Lady Selina. “How much more delicate a sofa of straw-coloured silk would have been.”

“What,

“What, for the habitation of an hermit?” said Lord Acreland.

“We, who live in the great world, have nothing to do with outward appearances;” answered Lady Selina: “it was made for pleasure, and you may as well persuade all who visit it to pass their time in prayer, as to sit on a filthy straw mattress. I am sure this pillow is only fit for the head of a madman.”

This unfortunate expression smote my heart! It shuddered! it throbbed at the idea! I endeavoured to steal out of the hermitage; Lady Selina rose to follow me, and, taking the arm of Lord Acreland, sauntered down the wood with affected feebleness. I need not tell you that I loitered behind to replace the precious pillow on the straw couch; that I brushed off the gravel with my handkerchief; that I pressed it to my bosom with holy veneration; or, that I imprinted a kiss on it more pure, more zealous, than ever was bestowed by a bigot on the relic of a martyr.

"Here are some of the finest trees in England!" cried Sir Edward, as we entered the Orangerie. "What does your Ladyship think of this collection?"

"I like it exceedingly," replied Lady Selina; "'tis perfectly Italian! Bergamot is my favourite perfume!" (breaking off a clustre of buds from one of the finest trees.) Sir Edward's symptomatic inquietude returned with redoubled force: I could scarcely forbear smiling while I observed his countenance, where respect struggled with rage, and patience with disappointment.

"I love *bouquets* of orange buds, of all things," said Lady Selina; "and never think of expense when I have a wish to gratify."

"So I perceive!" replied my father, smothering his resentment; "and all I can say, is, that 'tis very lucky every fine lady is not of your way of thinking; we should have nothing but bankruptcies in the City if people of fashion got among us."

"Here

O

"Lord,

“ Lord, Sir Edward !” exclaimed Lady Selina ; “ why you are perfectly savage ?”

“ Not at all, my Lady,” replied my father ; “ but what’s mine’s my own ; and I have no notion of prodigality, for my part : rarities can’t be had for nothing ; and I like to please my eye, though it does cost me something.”

“ What then,” answered Lady Selina ; “ you think that oranges are made to be looked at ; pray does a similar opinion extend to all other eatable commodities ?”

After rubbing the blossoms between her hands, she began to examine the fruit, pressing every orange in order to ascertain its degree of ripeness.

“ Let us get out,” said Sir Edward, “ let us get out, the smell of these trees is too powerful for my head ; I don’t feel well—I never could bear perfume in my life.”

“ Heavens !” exclaimed Lady Selina, “ I adore it of all things ! I bought a bottle of otto of roses last winter, at the India House, it cost me thirty guineas. I wish I had employed you, Sir Edward ;

perhaps you would have got the same quantity for half the sum—in the way of trade. But we fashionable mortals are born to be imposed upon.”

With many hints on the part of my father, we again sallied forth, and in a few minutes reached the abbey; on entering the drawing room, Lady Selina threw herself upon the blue silk sofa; her slippers again annoyed Sir Edward, no less than the powder of her chignon; both of which left evident marks on her unfortunate resting place.

“Suppose we make a rubber at whist?” said my father,

“I never play at any game but *piquet*,” answered Lady Selina: “I have no objection to one party with you.”

Sir Edward accepted the challenge; twenty guineas was the sum named by her Ladyship; and they took their seats without farther ceremony, after Sir Edward had particularly desired me to “amuse his Lordship with a tune on my spinnet.”

“I would

"I would obey you with great pleasure, Sir," answered I; "but my *piàno fortè* is really out of tune."

"Then try your harp, child;" said Sir Edward: "I like the harp mightily, ever since I heard the blind man at Chepstow."

With an aching heart I obeyed; my trembling fingers scarcely struck the chords; my depression of mind was every moment augmented by the melancholy vibration of the instrument.

"Let us have—'Thou art gone away from me, Donald!' said Lady Selina, smiling at Lord Acreland.

I began; every note increased my agony; I could scarcely articulate the words, and was nearly overwhelmed with distress, when I was kindly interrupted by Lady Selina, with, "Did you ever hear Madame Delaval? she plays divinely! I suppose you don't sing any thing but English."

I opened my *piàno fortè*, and selected the favourite "*Non vi turbate*," in Alceste. When I had sung three or four bars—
"How well the Banti executes that

song!" exclaimed Lady Selina, addressing herself to Lord Acreland.

Again I paused.—

"Do you know any of Krompholtz's lessons? they are charming things!" continued Lady Selina.

Again I took my harp, and began the favourite concerto of that composer, and was a third time interrupted by her Ladyship, who rose abruptly from the table, saying—

"You owe me twenty guineas—I play no more—I shan't have time to dress for dinner."

Lady Selina left the room, and Sir Edward stood for some moments, shuffling the cards, without uttering a syllable.

A servant soon informed us that dinner was served, and we assembled in the saloon. Sir Edward recovered his spirits; but Lady Selina tasted every thing, and commended nothing. The ice'd wines were too cold for her stomach; the ragouts were too highly seasoned; the poultry was kept too long; the venison dressed too soon; turtle she abhorred; fish she
could

could not bear; soup was her aversion; at last, the third course presented a dish that was honoured with her approbation.

"This!" exclaimed she, "is fit for the gods!"

"Indeed, my Lady! What have you got there?" said Sir Edward.

"A dish of my own catering," replied Lady Selina.

Sir Edward examined it. "I hate crin-cum crancums of all kinds," said he; "but, to oblige your Ladyship, I'll taste 'em: what do you call 'em?"

"Did you never eat any? why, they are pine-apple fritters; nothing can be more delicious! The first I ever tasted were at the *Bagatelle*, near Paris;" said Lady Selina.

Sir Edward, who had just taken one on the point of his fork, sat, as if petrified with wonder, and without resolution to taste the precious morsel. At length, recovering from his surprise, he exclaimed, "this is luxury indeed!"

"It appears to be such," answered Lady
O 4 Selina;

Selina; "but it only took four pine-apples to make the whole dish."

"Four pine-apples hacked up into fritters!" said Sir Edward, with a deep sigh. "Astonishing! why, this will make a confounded hole in my pinery! Lord have mercy upon us! well, live and learn! but this beats any thing I ever saw in all my days!"

Sir Edward had scarcely recovered from his consternation, when the dessert was placed on the table; and two pine-apples made their appearance.

"Again!" exclaimed my father: "why, zounds, my Lady, I ought to have a wilderness of pine-apples! This is carrying the joke rather too far. Who the devil ordered the dessert? One would think that pine-apples grew in the highway: who would be so extravagant as to have two such pine apples in a dessert for four people?"

"I would;" said Lady Selina, with the most provoking indifference.

"What! without leave or licence?" cried Sir Edward.

"As

“As to leave,” answered Lady Selina, “our sex have the delightful privilege of doing whatever they please; and, with respect to licence, I know of no penalty for eating a pine-apple; and, therefore, shall not think of troubling myself with useless ceremonies.”

Sir Edward was almost suffocated with rage; Lady Selina sung an Italian air; and Lord Acreland proposed coffee, which was immediately brought. After they had drank their *marefchino*, Lady Selina ordered tea in the grotto, and thither we repaired; Sir Edward not forgetting to take a survey of his desolated pinery!

“What think you of a syllabub?” said my father, as he entered the grotto. As silence is supposed to be a signal of consent, he hastened towards the abbey, and, in a short time, the bowl was set before us.

“There’s a treat fit for a prince!” cried Sir Edward; “and in my favourite bowl too! ’Twas given to me on my wedding day, by a captain of an Indiaman, and when I gave my Lord Mayor’s dinner, it

was thought the most extraordinary thing at the table."

"Except yourself, Sir Edward;" said Lady Selina.

The compliment, for as such it was received, seemed to flatter my father's *amour propre*; and, taking the capacious bowl, he gallantly presented it to her Ladyship.

"I abhor syllabub, Sir Edward;" said Lady Selina.

"I insist upon pledging you," replied Sir Edward. He advanced, she retreated; till, in the conflict, an unlucky touch of her Ladyship's elbow, overset the bowl, and the whole of its contents covered the embroidered waistcoat of the unfortunate Sir Edward.

It is impossible to describe the sensations expressed in every countenance! Lady Selina with difficulty suppressed the laugh, which even the gravest philosopher could scarcely have subdued. Sir Edward stood with his arms extended, gazing by turns, and with equal mortification, on his many coloured waistcoat, and the scattered fragments of his ill-fated bowl!

Lady

Lady Selina, after making many awkward apologies, not without blaming the too zealous hospitality which had occasioned the disaster, promised to present Sir Edward a waistcoat of her own work : his anger subsided in a great degree at this mark of condescension ; and we returned to the abbey to arrange the amusements of the evening. A drive about the lanes was chosen by Lady Selina, and the sociable was ordered immediately. As soon as Sir Edward had changed his dress, we proceeded through the park, and along the road leading to London. At the distance of half a mile from the abbey we were overtaken by a post-chaise and four ; the postillions were suddenly stopped, and Lady Selina instantly recognized her friend and innamorato, Sir Clifford Wilmot. Her rapture was undescribable.

“ My dear Sir Clifford ! ” exclaimed her Ladyship ; “ you shan’t proceed one step farther. Whither are you going ? How lucky we are to meet you ! ”

“ I am going to Bath, ” replied the

Baronet; "my physician thinks bathing absolutely necessary for my health."

"To Bath! oh, Heavens!" said Lady Selina, "to Bath in this sultry season! Why you will not be able to survive it: you'll die if you go to Bath."

"I shall die if I do *not* go;" answered Sir Clifford.

"No matter for that;" said Lady Selina. "You must absolutely stay two or three days at the abbey; Sir Edward will be delighted to receive you—won't you Sir Edward?"

"Certainly," answered my father; at the same time observing Sir Clifford with a mixture of wonder and suspicion; for a more grotesque figure never called forth the powers of a Bunbury.

"Isn't he very handsome?" said Lady Selina, pressing my arm.

"Not very:" answered I, astonished at the question, which was asked in a whisper loud enough to be distinctly heard by Sir Clifford.

"Leave your chaise, and come into the
2 sociable,

sociable, we can make room for you," said Lady Selina.

The Baronet accepted the invitation, and, with little ceremony, placed himself between Lord Acreland and Sir Edward.

The next ten minutes were employed in a rapid succession of questions. Who did you leave in town? What's the news? How did Mrs. Trickwell's faro-bank close for the winter? Have you been lately at Mrs. Delmore's? What do they think of her last publication? What does Mrs. Lyric say about our damning her comedy? These interrogations, and many more, equally uninteresting, were laconically answered by Sir Clifford; who, instead of attending to the inquisitive Lady Selina, fixed his eyes on my face, with the most disconcerting effrontery.

"Why do you bury yourself in this obscure spot, Lady Selina? Why don't you go to one of the watering-places?" said Sir Clifford. "All the world inquires after you. Apropos, I supped at Mrs. Delmore's the night before I left town, and had quite an adventure! A ridiculous
tabby

tabby was at me the whole evening ; ogled me without intermission :—I humoured the old lady, and we amused the party wonderfully. She pleased me infinitely—the most comical old quiz I ever met with ! Sung delightfully—played enchantingly—talked incessantly—and looked ridiculously ! “ I thought I should expire with laughing. The most complete petticoat pedant that ever pored over the pages of literature ! ”

“ Heavens ? ” exclaimed Lady Selina, “ where did Delmore pick up such an original ? ”

“ Why really,” answered Sir Clifford, “ I don’t know what part of the habitable globe was honoured with her birth ; but, by her name, I should imagine she came from the Pellew Islands.”

I now perceived that this “ tabby,” this “ quiz,” this “ petticoat pedant,” this ridiculous old lady, was no other than my poor dear aunt, Juliana Pengwynn.

“ They say,” continued Sir Clifford, “ that she is devilish rich, and nearly related to a black trader of still greater wealth.”

wealth. She was very fond of me upon my soul; but as I had no inclination to promote the slave trade, I fought shy: I have no idea of selling my freedom for a hoghead of sugar, or a bale of cotton."

Lady Selina endeavoured in vain to conceal her satisfaction. Sir Clifford proceeded.—

"Now I think of it, Lord Acreland, the town talk is, that you are going to marry a citizen's daughter; I hope you know too much of life to do so silly a thing;—damn it, don't mix the noble blood of your ancestors with the puddle of plebeians."

"I shall defy ridicule," said Lord Acreland, gravely, and looking towards me in evident confusion, "when I present this lady as my wife." Sir Clifford begged my pardon, and all was silent till we reached the abbey.

Fatigued with the uninteresting conversation of our illustrious visitors, I could not resist the impulse of my mind, which longed for a few hours of rest and meditation. I knew not how to make any
plausible

plausible excuse for withdrawing, and to remain the whole evening in the misery of listening to their senseless jargon, would have been insupportable. Lady Selina and Sir Clifford luckily sat down to piquet; Sir Edward stole out to smoke his pipe; and Lord Acreland to write letters. Thus deserted by all, I made no ceremony in retiring to my chamber.

Even there I was not permitted to enjoy repose, for I had not been there ten minutes before I heard the creaking of footsteps along the gallery, and presently after a gentle tap at the door of my dressing-room. I rose to open it, and to my infinite astonishment, found that the officious intruder was no other than Sir Clifford Wilmot; without any apology for thus breaking in upon my seclusion, he entered the room, and approached the window, commending the prospect, and making trifling observations on the surrounding objects. I stood, rapt in amazement, but what were my sensations, when, on hearing Lady Selina approach the apartment, the

the presuming Sir Clifford, with all the *sang froid* imaginable, bolted the door.

“Heavens!” exclaimed I, “where is the necessity of this precaution? Surely, Sir Clifford, since you have so abruptly interrupted my studies, there can be no impropriety in Lady Selina’s being an addition to the party?”

“Hush! for Heaven’s sake don’t speak;” said Sir Clifford. “You cannot think what a malicious woman she is; she will make a thousand stories out of this accidental trifle: the whole town will talk of it, and you don’t reflect how ridiculous we shall both appear.” This was uttered in a whisper, and accompanied with a thousand extravagant gestures. “She will be gone in a moment,” continued Sir Clifford, “and, upon my honour, I will depart immediately.”

Lady Selina now called repeatedly for admission, and tried the door with the most persevering malice. I was perfectly wild with confusion; I knew not what to say, or how to act; on a sudden all was silent.

“She

“She is gone,” said Sir Clifford, and again repaired to the balcony window. I unlocked the door, and, after assuring the Baronet that I considered his conduct as a violation of every thing civil or decorous, flew to find Lady Selina, who had, by this time, reached the lawn. I followed her; and, making many confused apologies, walked with her towards the shrubbery—consoling myself with the idea that nothing more would be said of the adventure: but, alas! here my humiliation did not terminate; for, on looking towards the abbey, I beheld Sir Clifford still at the window of my dressing-room, leaning, with the most easy indifference, on the balcony, where I had left him.

Lady Selina’s eyes seemed armed with the lightning of revenge. She stood for some minutes like a statue—steadfastly gazing on me with a mixture of surprise and resentment. At last, in a tone of insolent disdain, she exclaimed—“Well, Miss Clarendon! this is what I did not suspect. I thought you had been a total stranger to Sir Clifford Wilmot. The
for-

formality of a presentation I find was wholly unnecessary."

"I assure you, Lady Selina——" I could say no more.

Sir Clifford descended to the library.

"O pray don't discompose your spirits! I shall, for my brother's sake, conceal the matter: yet permit me to say that a little more precaution would not be amiss—when it is considered that you are shortly to be his wife, and my sister."

In vain did I protest that I had never seen Sir Clifford Wilmot till he was presented to me by Lady Selina. In vain did I assure her that his intrusion was both unwished for and unexpected. Her sarcastic replies, the obsequious inclination of her head, the emphatic tone with which she frequently pronounced—"Indeed! really! I dare say!" mortified me so severely that, to conceal my sensations, I left her, and again retired to my dressing-room; there a shower of tears relieved my oppressed heart, and my agitated mind soon became more composed and quiet.

I now

I now observed Lady Selina and Sir Clifford walking on the lawn. At first they conversed seriously; and I could plainly perceive that his was the language of protestation and contrition. She frequently stopped, as if to expostulate;—and, after some time wasted in argument, they concluded the discourse by immoderate laughter. You will easily conceive my mortification; to know myself the subject of ridicule, of contempt, of insolent animadversion—perhaps of inhuman calumny! I could scarcely bear the reflection.

After seeing Sir Clifford kiss Lady Selina's hand, as a ratification of peace, I threw myself into a chair which stood near the window: nothing could be more enchanting than the prospect from the balcony; the sun had just sunk beneath the horizon; the serenity of the hour harmonised my senses; the tops of the forest trees were still faintly tinged with a golden hue, reflected from the glowing light which spread along the hemisphere. The

in-

intervening landscape, every moment wrapped in vapour, became less and less distinct, till one irregular line of dusky grey terminated the prospect. The dappled clouds, that floated on the vast expanse above, were variegated with tints of gold and purple; and, to complete the diversity of nature's beauties, the moon rose majestically above the distant mountains—

Peering in silv'ry panoply of light,

And scatt'ring round her imitative day!

No sound interrupted the sublime tranquillity in which creation seemed to slumber, except the frequent knell, which, in slow and deep vibrations, proclaimed the departure of some happy villager!—Gracious God! how sincerely did I envy his repose!

Involuntarily I fell into profound meditation: my scrutoire was temptingly inviting to the Muse, and I had not resolution to resist her inspiration.—“Enchanting serenity!” said I, as my eyes were directed

rected towards the infinity of beauties
which were now stealing to temporary ob-
livion.

Pale twilight! wrapp'd in melancholy grey,

Thee I adore! and all thy shad'wy train:

Thy tears, that tremble on each blossom'd spray,

Thy breezy breath, that skims along the plain,

Fanning the bosom of the weary swain,

As home he saunters at the close of day,

While the hills echo with his thoughtless strain,

Of ditty old—or merry roundelay!

Where splendor gilds deceit, let pride controul:

Mine be the low-roof'd eot, and tranquil mind,

Where truth, unvarnish'd, calm, and unconfin'd,

Shrinks not, to scrutinize the conscious soul!

Let insects, in meridian lustre shine;

The cool, the pensive hour, of mental bliss be mine!

Such were my reflections: if they are ac-
ceptable to you, I shall endeavour to for-
get the misfortunes of the day, and look
forward, with patience, to more consoling
prospects.

Adieu!

SOPHIA CLARENDON.



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